

**GOVERNMENT OF SASKATCHEWAN'S PROGRESS REPORT ON
THE 220 RECOMMENDATIONS OF
THE ACTION COMMITTEE ON THE RURAL ECONOMY (ACRE)**

**PREPARED BY
THE POLICY AND PLANNING BRANCH
SASKATCHEWAN RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

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Executive Summary

The ACRE was announced in the December 1999 Throne Speech, with a mandate to explore and generate innovative ideas and recommendations for government and industry, and act as catalyst for positive change and economic development in rural Saskatchewan.

In accordance with its mandate, ACRE has conducted research and provided five sets of innovative recommendations, totaling 220, to the provincial government. The first set of recommendations was provided through ACRE's interim report in January 2001. In December 2002, the government responded with the release of a document titled "*A Strategy for Rural Saskatchewan: Responding to ACRE*". At that time, the province and ACRE hosted a joint news conference to highlight the Rural Strategy and the role played by ACRE in the development of that strategic document.

Following that, ACRE provided further recommendations in the form of supplemental recommendations, including recommendations from subcommittees that had just completed their work and recommendations that had just been passed by the full ACRE Committee.

ACRE continued with work under Phase II of its mandate. Those efforts culminated with a further 35 recommendations that were presented to government in May 2005.

The government has examined each of the 220 recommendations and compiled them into this comprehensive report. The recommendations are labeled as follows in the report:

- 7 Initial Recommendations (I – 1 to I – 7)
- 58 Final Recommendations (F – 1 to F – 58)
- 108 Supplemental Recommendations (S – 1 to S – 108)
- 12 Supplemental Transportation Recommendations (T – 1 to T – 12)
- 35 Phase II Recommendations (P - 1 to P -35)

From this document, which represents a concerted effort by all government departments and Crown Corporations to ensure that the document is as accurate and up to date as possible, it can be seen that the government has made significant progress in addressing ACRE's recommendations.

ACRONYMS

AAFC	Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada
AAFRD	Alberta Agriculture, Food and Rural Development
ABE	Adult Basic Education
ACRE	Action Committee on the Rural Economy
ADD	Agriculture Development and Diversification
ADF	Agricultural Development Fund
AKC	Agriculture Knowledge Centre
APF	Agricultural Policy Framework
ATCC	Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission
ATPC	Area Transportation Planning Committee
BRAND	Broadband for Rural and Northern Development
BSE	Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy
CAIS	Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization
CEMS	Community Energy Management Service
CFIP	Canadian Farm Income Program
CGC	Canadian Grain Commissioner
CIC	Crown Investment Corporation
CTC	Canadian Tourism Commission
CWB	Canadian Wheat Board
DHT	Department of Highways and Transportation
DTFRS	Designated Truck Freight Route System
EFP	Environmental Farm Plans
EI	Employment Insurance
EMS	Emergency Medical Services
EU	European Union
FIFS	Farm Income and Farm Structure subcommittee
FNUC	First Nations University of Canada
FSIN	Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations
GDP	gross domestic product
GPS	Global Positioning Services
GR	Government Relations
GRF	general revenue fund
GSH	Great Sand Hills
HT	Highways and Transportation
IR	Industry and Resources
K-12	Kindergarten to Grade 12
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NEPS	Nursing Education Program of Saskatchewan
NISA	Net Income Stabilization Account

OACC	Organic Agriculture Centre of Canada
OFC	Office of the Fire Commissioner
PAA	Practical and Applied Arts
PCAB	Provincial Council of ADD Boards
PFRA	Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration
PGRP	Prairie Grain Roads Program
PMRA	Pest Management Regulatory Authority
PNP	Provincial Nominee Program
PST	provincial sales tax
PTRC	Petroleum Technology Research Centre
R & D	research and development
RD	Rural Development
REDA	Regional Economic Development Authorities
RHA	Regional Health Authority
RPEG	Rural Practice Establishment Grant
SAC	Saskatchewan Aviation Council
SAF	Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food
SAFRR	Saskatchewan Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization (April 1, 2005, changed to SAF)
SARM	Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipality
SBLA	Small Business Loans Association
SCCD	Saskatchewan Council for Community Development
SCIC	Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation
SCN	Saskatchewan Communication Network
SGI	Saskatchewan Government Insurance
SIAST	Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology
SINP	Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program
SIR	Saskatchewan Industry and Resources
SMEs	small to medium enterprises
STC	Saskatchewan Transportation Company
SUMA	Saskatchewan Urban Municipalities Association
TLE	Treaty Land Entitlements
TPP	Trucking Partnership Program
U of S	University of Saskatchewan
UK	United Kingdom
US	United States
WBDC	Western Beef Development Centre
WEPA	Western Economic Partnership Agreement

Interim Recommendations

ACRE Recommendations & Government Actions

Access to Capital

I – 1 That government should improve access to capital funding by:

- **Establishing an Agriculture Venture Capital Fund aimed at stimulating new capital investment in large farm related and value-added agriculture;**
- **Establishing an Enterprise Investment Fund that would enable equity investment into new expanded agri-business by smaller groups of interested investors in a local community;**
- **Establishing a Feedlot Loan Guarantee for the feedlot industry, similar to the Livestock Loan Guarantee Program; and**
- **Investigating the development of an Adjustment/Transition Rural Development Fund aimed at smaller on-farm diversification businesses that could assist with generational transfers and rural development.**

Government Response/Example(s):

- APF – Renewal chapter will launch a new education and skills program for farmers, called the “Canadian Agriculture Skills Service”, to help farmers and their spouses increase their family income through improved farm practices and building new agricultural enterprises, building new rural business ventures or through obtaining employment income. (See I-2 for more program details)
- CIC and IR are exploring a Venture Capital Fund for small business considering the new Investment Saskatchewan mandate and structure and other initiatives in the province.

- Feedlot Loan Guarantee Program (Feedlot Construction Option):
 - Provides a loan guarantee of 25 per cent to lenders who finance the construction of a new feedlot or the expansion of an existing feedlot.
 - The program is available to feedlot operators and provides a guarantee limit of \$.075 million per feedlot.
 - The Feedlot Construction Option is part of a suite of new program options introduced in 2004 and collectively, these programs have a government guarantee cap of \$20 million.

- Feedlot Equity Option (Loan Guarantee):
 - The Feedlot Equity Option program provides a loan guarantee to lenders who advance credit to individuals who wish to make an equity investment in a new or expanding feedlot.
 - The guarantee provided to the financial institution by the provincial government is 25 per cent of the loan(s) outstanding at the time of first default
 - The program is designed to encourage community participation in the financing of new or expanding feedlots
 - This program options remains under consideration as the level of support from lenders has been low.

- Individual Feeder Option:
 - Provides a loan guarantee of 25 per cent to lenders who finance the purchase of feeder cattle held in a feedlot.
 - The program is available to individual feedlot operators and provides a borrowing limit of \$3 million per feedlot participant.
 - Currently there are no active participants in this program. However, once the beef industry stabilizes, the program is expected to begin operation.

- Short-Term Hog Loan Program – Deferral Option:
 - As a result of depressed prices and limited cash flow, SAFRR introduced a deferral option under the Short-Term Hog Loan program in the spring of 2004 in order to provide the option to hog producers who receive loans under this program to extend the repayment period for their loan
 - The deferral option allowed producers to defer principal payment on their Short-Term Hog Loans for one year

- The SBLA Program, which continues to help create and maintain jobs by providing a line of credit to local Small Business Loans Associations, which in turn provide loans of up to \$15,000 to businesses that have experienced difficulty accessing financing through traditional means. As of July 2004, the SBLA program has funded over 8,900 new and existing businesses; provided loans totaling \$47.5 million; created 9,890 jobs; maintained 9,805 jobs; and over 90 per cent of activity is outside Regina and Saskatoon.
- Agrivision, working closely with labour organizations is developing a labour sponsored venture capital fund targeted at increasing investment in the Saskatchewan value added agriculture.
- The concept of an enterprise investment fund is under active examination and consideration.
- The establishment of Prairie Ventures Fund (see <http://www.gov.sk.ca/newsrel/releases/2002/01/21-033.html>) addresses this recommendation; Golden Opportunities Fund; Working Ventures Fund.

I – 2 That the provincial government, in co-operation with the federal government, place a priority on establishing a skills development program designed to help producers to remain in rural Saskatchewan by:

- **Assisting producers in improving their farm management skills;**
- **Assisting producers in adjusting their enterprise into new agricultural opportunity areas;**
- **Assisting producers by improving their opportunities for off-farm employment; and**
- **Assisting producers to develop the skills necessary for full-time employment should they choose to exit farming.**

Government Response/Example(s):

- The APF Renewal Program was launched in Saskatchewan on October 1, 2004. This includes the Canadian Agricultural Skills Service which supports skills development and learning. Assistance will be provided to access training in areas such as business management, accounting, finance, human resource management, training for employment, or training to acquire skills for starting a new business. Financial support such as tuition fees for courses, textbooks and travel will be provided for eligible clients with an approved Individual Learning Plan (ILP) who are pursuing new skills to capture new opportunities.

In April 2004, SAF created the Agri-Business Development Branch, which includes the former Family Farm Opportunities Initiative to address regional agriculture development needs. Offices are located at: Prince Albert, Saskatoon, Yorkton, Regina, Swift Current, Outlook, North Battleford, Tisdale, and Weyburn. Specialists provide leaderships and expertise to entrepreneurs and community groups in initiating and applying business development processes and building community capacity (both human and financial). This is done through building partnerships with people and agencies in order to help clients expand, change or start an agriculture-related business. Regional Business Planning Specialists deliver renewal programming in partnership with the federal government under the APF Agreement to assist farmers in improving their farm management skills; in adjusting their enterprise into new agricultural opportunity areas; in improving their opportunities for off-farm employment; and, in developing the skills necessary for full-time employment should they choose to exit farming.

I – 3 That the Government of Saskatchewan facilitate rural development by implementing:

- **An ongoing regulatory review to assess the appropriateness and effectiveness of all regulations;**
- **A timely process to examine specific regulatory issues raised by those involved in industry;**
- **A mechanism to guide proponents through the approval process; and**
- **An ombudsman to serve as an independent, third party adjudicator of disputes with agriculture and agri-food.**

All levels of government will commit to clear standards of accountability for development projects.

Government Response/Example(s):

- As part of a provincial Regulatory Reform Initiative announced in 1996, government committee to review all existing regulations within a 10-year time frame. To date, over 81 per cent of the original regulations have been reviewed for relevancy and effectiveness, with a view to updating or repealing them if necessary. The Competitiveness Branch of IR has been tasked with identifying and addressing red tape concerns and business irritants, particularly as they impact small and medium sized businesses in the province.
- GR, SAF and other departments are assisting SARM in its review of rural economic impediments under its “Clearing the Path” initiative.

- The Agri-Business Development Branch (SAF) focuses on working with other economic development stakeholders in the region to identify both the competitive opportunities for each respective region and also the barriers that proponents and existing agri-business experience with respect to business development and expansion. This information will be available to policy-makers and will thereby contribute to the policy decisions of government. Agri-business Development Branch will also provide service support to proponents as they pursue their business initiatives.
- Saskatchewan has a Provincial Ombudsman that serves as an independent third party adjudicator between individuals and the province. There is no intent to duplicate this service.

I – 4 That the federal and provincial governments take necessary actions, including increased funding, to provide universal, affordable access to high speed Internet and cell phone coverage to all residents throughout Saskatchewan.

Government Response/Example(s):

- In March 2002, SaskTel announced the expansion of its high speed internet service to 191 more Saskatchewan communities over the next two years under the province's CommunityNet high speed internet initiative.
- In June 2004, the second phase of CommunityNet was launched. An additional 71 communities are being added to the network. As well, most farmsteads and businesses within 30 kilometres of many existing CommunityNet centres will be able to access SaskTel's commercial high-speed network. December 2004 saw the completion of upgrade installs from one way to two way satellites for 72 First Nations schools thanks to a partnership between Saskatchewan Property Management Corporation and KCDC. KCDC is a Regional Management Organization that has been contracted to provide program delivery for Industry Canada's First Nations SchoolNet.
- Upon completion of the second phase of CommunityNet, more than 86 per cent of the Saskatchewan population will have access to high speed internet.

- The federal government has made available \$3.5 million from Broadband for Rural and Northern Development (BRAND), \$2 million from the Northern Development Accord and \$525,000 from the federal/provincial WEPA over the past two years to fund Broadband (high speed internet) in Saskatchewan. The Northern Brand project is a \$11.6 million project with a total of \$5.6 million coming from eternal funding including BRAND. The remaining dollars are SaskTel. The majority of benefactors live in rural, northern and Aboriginal communities. They also provide \$5 million for the first phase of CommunityNet and an additional \$2.25 million to connect all the libraries to high speed internet.

I – 5 That the Government of Saskatchewan should devote more resources to the immigration file. Among the areas that the government should concentrate on include the following:

- **Ensure that the current Provincial Nominee Program (PNP) is fully utilized with a more aggressive marketing approach;**
- **Make the PNP a permanent agreement and negotiate with the federal government to increase the number of nominees (as the province feels necessary) under a future PNP;**
- **Ensure that the needs of the agricultural and rural sectors be taken into account as the province considers broadening the scope of skills it will consider under the PNP.**

It is recommended that the Government of Saskatchewan discuss with the federal government a Federal/Saskatchewan agreement on migrant workers similar to agreements with other provinces.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SAF has increased both the human and financial resources that are working to market the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program in foreign markets. Efforts have been mainly focused in the UK, and Netherlands because, according to Statistics Canada analysis, new rural immigrants to Canada have traditionally come from Western Europe and that is expected to continue. As well, the types of skills required to broaden and deepen the rural economy are found in these two markets (e.g., livestock, irrigation, special crops, value-added and distribution). SAF has a strategy in these two markets which includes: targeted

advertising in the farm press; presentations at agriculture schools; in-person meetings with farmers; booths at immigration trade shows in both countries; provision of marketing materials as support to Saskatchewan realtors promoting their services; provision of agronomic information; and assistance with planning to incoming farmers visiting Saskatchewan.

- The province is opening the provincial nominee program (SINP) which will do away with specific skill categories and make it easier for immigrants to access employment opportunities in any sector and for rural Saskatchewan employers to recruit immigrant employees.
- The Commonwealth Caribbean and Mexican Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program was implemented on a pilot basis in 2003 for the nursery, vegetable, fruit and honey industries. In 2003, 21 workers were employed under the program by two nursery operations, one fruit grower and one vegetable grower. In 2004, three beekeepers participated in the program and along with the same operations from 2003 employed a total of 32 workers. The Pilot was agreed upon for a three year period (beginning in 2003). The Pilot was doubled this year (2004), and there is indication of continued demand into the third year. A survey of workers in 2004 indicated a very positive response. Participating employers have also expressed very positive experiences with the program. There have been a number of favourable media interviews with employers.
- This remains under active examination by the ACRE Employment Subcommittee.

I – 6 That the Government of Saskatchewan make a commitment to a major public education program aimed specifically at Saskatchewan that emphasizes our rural strengths and resiliency and the facts about our competitiveness with other provinces - to be contracted through a third party.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Our Future is Wide Open: National advertising in the Globe and Mail and National Post emphasized our competitiveness compared to other jurisdictions. Used some rural-based examples e.g., Swift Current egg carton manufacturer; national TV commercial on Saskatchewan exports featured timothy hay producer and plastics manufacturer in Humboldt. A special six-page Saskatchewan supplement in the Globe and Mail has also featured an agricultural equipment manufacturer in Craik, a flax fibreprocessor in Canora, and an organic waste processor in Cudworth.

- Other initiatives include the Saskatchewan Dream which featured successful rural businesses across the province (2001-2003), Growing the Future and Ongoing sponsorship of Rotary's *Your Future is Here* campaign aimed at encouraging Saskatchewan young people to make their career in Saskatchewan.
- Non-government groups have come forward to carry the message of Saskatchewan's strengths and opportunities including Agrivision and the Chamber of Commerce.
- The *Saskatchewan Ambassadors Program* (formerly the Saskatchewan Business Ambassadors Program) – launched in 1998 promotes Saskatchewan as a place to do business. Under the program, people who are traveling outside of the province on business may receive a promotional kit with information on Saskatchewan. The information can be tailored for specific economic sectors and regions of the province. The program currently has about 750 ambassadors.
- As well, reports such as the KPMG Competitiveness Alternatives Report and more recently, the Chartered Accountants of Saskatchewan Reports are showing Saskatchewan as a place to invest.
- The Centennial celebrations attracted individuals into Saskatchewan and both supplement rural economic activity while allowing Saskatchewan to highlight itself as a place to live, raise a family and do business.

I – 7 That the ACRE committee urges the provincial government to take substantive action, including initiating the fuel tax rebate and other positive financial measures, to support the development of the ethanol and biofuel industry that would closely align Saskatchewan with other provinces in Canada. In addition, the Saskatchewan government should work with other provincial jurisdictions in western Canada to develop a coordinated marketing approach to encourage gas wholesalers and retailers to make ethanol and bio-blended fuels readily available to all residents. Further, that the provincial government mandate increasing levels of ethanol and biofuels content within defined timelines coordinated with the production capacity of Saskatchewan.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan has taken a leading role in developing the ethanol industry in Canada. In 2002, the province released the *Greenprint for Ethanol Production Strategy*. Legislation and regulations have been passed for mandating the blending of ethanol into gasoline. Regulations state that 30 per cent of the ethanol market will be reserved for small producers. Based on these policies, investors have committed over \$100 million to building ethanol plants in Saskatchewan, and many other communities and agricultural organizations have expressed interest in building plants. Saskatchewan is working with the federal government and other provinces to ensure a national market for ethanol.

Final and Supplemental Recommendations

ACRE Recommendations & Government Actions

I. Competitiveness

F – 1 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan conduct a comprehensive review to assess the province's competitiveness.

Government Response/Example(s):

- A Competitiveness Branch has been established within Saskatchewan Industry and Resources. The Branch will examine barriers to investment and growth through consideration of taxation issues, labour issues, regulatory reform, investment attraction and incentive programs.
- The provincial government is participating in discussions to harmonize Securities Commission approval processes across the country. Implementation of a passport system is proceeding with a targeted implementation date of September, 2005. Under a passport system, approval in one jurisdiction will enable an applicant to operate in another jurisdiction which is party to the agreement without going through the Securities Commission approval process again.
- The Premier's Investment Attraction Council was formed to seek out opportunities to increase investment in Saskatchewan.
- Effective October 1, 2002, the government introduced lower royalty and production tax structures on production from new oil and gas wells and projects, introduced a new system of volume incentives, and reduced the Corporation Capital Tax surcharge. The province also introduced changes to benefit horizontal and deep wells and established a new royalty and production tax regime for natural gas produced by-product from oil wells.

- In 2003 the government made substantial changes to the royalty tax structure for potash. The changes included removing the profit tax component for incremental sales above the 2000-2001 average sales level and permitted capital spending in excess of 90 per cent of the 2001 spending level to be depreciated at 100 per cent.
- In 2001, the government also made changes with respect to uranium. Taxes were changed from a profit basis to an ad valorem (percentage based on sales) basis and the top marginal tax rate was reduced from 50 per cent to 19 per cent.
- In the 2002 Budget, the Corporation Capital Tax exemption was increased from \$10 million to \$15 million depending on a company's proportion of employment in Saskatchewan.
- In September of 2002, a six year mineral exploration incentive program was introduced. Components of the program include providing incentives to prospectors and exploration companies to initiate new mineral exploration, the development of a competitive diamond royalty and tax structure and rebates on fuel tax used in off-road mineral exploration activities and for remote power generation.
- In March 2005, an independent Business Tax Review Committee headed by Mr. Jack Vicq was appointed to examine Saskatchewan's business taxes relative to other jurisdictions and to make recommendations by November 30, 2005, for changes to increase the province's competitiveness and encourage job creation and investment.

F – 2 Explores the adoption of a “Saskatchewan Value-Added Tax Credit” by December 2002.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Tax Incentive programs for the manufacturing and processing sector in Saskatchewan consist of the Manufacturing and Processing Profits Tax Reduction and the Manufacturing and Processing Investment Tax Credit. Both programs apply to firms in the manufacturing and processing industries.

- The two existing "value-added" tax incentives will continue to be examined in terms of their effectiveness and in terms of government's overall taxation policy and fiscal capacity.
- The Vicq Commission is currently examining into all aspects of business taxation in the province. Once its report is issued government will assess its recommendations within the context of the 2006-07 budget development process.
- This remains under active examination by the Business Development Subcommittee of ACRE.
- The independent Business Tax Review Committee headed by Mr. Jack Vicq will examine various tax incentives, including a value-added tax credit, and make recommendations by November 30, 2005, to increase the province's competitiveness and encourage investment and job creation.

F – 3 Ensures consistency in taxation of all rural municipalities and specifically, the application of punitive mill rates.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Local tax tools have been provided to municipalities to promote local autonomy and to give municipalities the ability to manage tax shifts within their jurisdictions to address local circumstances.
- GR completed and publicly released a report examining the use of local tax tools in 2001 and 2002. The report is posted on GR's website.
- With the implementation of the 2005 revaluation, the use of mill rate factors will be reexamined by the government to determine their impacts on property tax distribution. In the context of school division restructuring, which comes into effect in 2006, mill rate factors for the purpose of education property tax will be reexamined. Changes, if warranted, will be considered after the reviews are completed.

F – 4 Explores the potential for a special youth tax structure as a means of encouraging youth to stay in or relocate to Saskatchewan to start businesses and families.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The province is committed to encouraging Saskatchewan students to develop their careers right here at home and is actively pursuing initiatives to make this happen.

The Saskatchewan Post-Secondary Graduate Tax Credit is a one-time tax credit that graduates and journeypersons may apply against their Saskatchewan Income Tax.

For 2005, the graduate tax credit will increase from \$500 to \$675 for students who graduate from eligible post-secondary institutions between January 1 and December 31, 2005. The Tax Credit will continue to increase each year to \$1,000 by 2007.

F – 5 Takes steps to alleviate the current education tax burden on farmland.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Boughen Commission released its report in January 2004, with 12 recommendations. The recommendations included a reduction in education property tax by \$300 million over six years.
- Government announced it is meeting its commitment to address property tax relief by dedicating \$110 million in the 2005 and 2006 taxation years to reduce the education property levy on all properties in Saskatchewan. Through the Working Committee on Education Property Tax Relief, the Government of Saskatchewan is working with SARM, SUMA and the Saskatchewan School Board Association, to determine a long term solution to education property tax relief based on the solid foundation laid by the Education Equity Initiative of equity for students and taxpayers.

F – 6 Reduces the reliance of educational funding on the property tax base by completing the major review of the Foundation Operating Grant and increasing the funding for education out of provincial revenues.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Boughen Commission released its report in January 2004, with 12 recommendations. The recommendations include a reduction in education property tax by \$300 million over six years, as well as a recommendation to revise the Foundation Operating Grant program.
- Government has moved forward with a three-phase program designed to renew and restructure our K-12 education system.
- The key elements of this plan are: moving to larger school divisions and a system that will be better able to provide a full range of programs and services to our children; developing a fairer system of funding from the provincial treasury with a focus on equity, simplicity, and transparency of government funding; and a commitment to long-term education property tax relief in Saskatchewan.

Renewing and restructuring school divisions will ensure that greater fairness and equity is brought into the education system, in the best interests of the students and taxpayers of the province.

Students will benefit from attending schools in larger school divisions that are better able to provide a full range of programs and services. Careful restructuring of school divisions, along with the implementation of a new governance structure, will allow for the regional pooling of property tax resources that will improve the equity for all students and property taxpayers in Saskatchewan. Any savings that may occur by reducing school division governance and administration will be channeled into programs and services for students.

Taxpayers will benefit from government's commitment to address property tax relief by a two-year education property tax relief package that will total an estimated \$55 million per year for the 2005 and 2006 property tax years. This will equate to an approximate eight per cent education tax credit on all properties that pay education tax, with a cap on tax relief benefits to commercial, industrial, and multi-unit residential properties of \$2,500 annually.

This education property tax relief program is a short-term solution. The Government of Saskatchewan is working with stakeholders to determine a long-term solution to education property tax relief based on the solid foundation laid by the Education Equity Initiative of equity for students and taxpayers. To be most effective, long-term relief must be based on the information coming out of revaluation, restructured school divisions and the new school operating grants system.

F – 7 Examines the use of the fuel tax exclusively for road Maintenance and construction in the province.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The province invests about 96 per cent of all on-road fuel tax revenue in the transportation system.

F – 8 Promotes machinery or land co-operatives, or collaborative ventures that promote the shared use of specialized equipment, through a more favourable tax environment.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Government policy is to provide equitable tax treatment to businesses irrespective of organizational structure.
- RD administers the Co-operative Development Assistance Program, which could help producers develop means to creatively share equipment, land, or machinery. RD maintains a network of Co-op Development specialists to assist with such endeavors.
- Saskatchewan provides \$300,000 annually in funding to Agricultural New Generation Co-operatives Program to provide opportunities for producer groups to work together to develop businesses for producing value-added products from primary production.

F – 9 Implements a dedicated consumer tax to provide funding for tourism product development and marketing; specifically for rural-based opportunities in Aboriginal, agricultural, cultural and ecological tourism.

- Tourism Saskatchewan has researched, and is working with key industry representatives to discuss whether or not there is support from industry for such dedicated tax program.
- Tourism Saskatchewan currently provides \$1.15 million annually to rural travel regions for cost-shared marketing and management support through the Keeping Provincial Action Committee on the Economy arrangements.

F – 10 Implements a taxation incentive/assistance program to help older farmers pass on the land to a succeeding generation.

- The APF, Renewal Program was launched in Saskatchewan on October 1, 2004. This program pays a portion of the costs for private professionals needed to create effective succession and intergeneration farm transfer plans. Farm families can obtain 50 per cent support to prepare plans up to a maximum of \$ 8,000.
- Bridging Generations Program:
 - The Bridging Generations Program is targeted at young people who wish to enter the farming industry or expand their operation.
 - The program offers a loan guarantee to participating lenders of 10 per cent for loans that the lender makes to young farmers that are highly leveraged.
 - The program has not been approved at this time.

F – 11 Applies a consistent set of regulations on the use of roads in all rural municipalities (business, farm and private) particularly in the application of road haul agreements.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan is working with Area Transportation Planning Committees in order to address regional planning needs.
- Authority for rural municipalities to issue permits for overweight vehicles was incorporated in legislation in the 2003 revision of *The Rural Municipality Act, 1989*.
- The Vehicle Weight and Dimension Regulations have been amended to allow more flexibility while retaining a core winter weight period.
- Saskatchewan continues to enter into heavy weight diversion agreements with municipalities.
- As a result of a review by GR of municipal road issues in the heavy oil producing area of Saskatchewan, in 2003 amendments were made to *The Rural Municipality Act, 1989* to provide authority for all rural municipalities to designate primary weights and truck routes for municipal roads. The new authorities provide for harmonization among rural municipalities and with provincial standards, as well as a dispute resolution process when a municipality or municipalities and road users cannot agree to the method of harmonizing weight limits or designated truck routes. The dispute resolution will help to ensure continuity of transportation routes across jurisdictions.
- Under the new *Municipalities Act*, effective January 2006, urban municipalities will have the same authorities. The new *Act* will also allow urban municipalities to enter into road maintenance agreements, similar to rural municipalities.
- GR will be undertaking a review of the road haul maintenance fee structure to determine if any adjustments are needed. Affected municipal and industry stakeholders will be consulted.
- GR, RD and HT are assisting SARM in its review of rural economic impediments under its “Clearing the Path” initiative. As part of this initiative, SARM is working to establish a primary weight road network.

F – 12 Provides the support necessary to have agricultural industry-wide policies and practices that enhance competitiveness through food safety and environmental practices (consistent with other jurisdictions).

Government Response/Example(s):

- SAF continues to collaborate with federal/provincial partners in the development of national traceability initiatives.
- SAF supports two programs within the department which enhance industry competitiveness:
 - The Value Chain Program (Market and Food Development Branch) is designed to encourage diversification and growth in Saskatchewan's agri-food economy by providing funding to value chain participants who commit to work together, sharing the risks and benefits to attain common goals and meet market requirements;
 - Surveillance (Inspection and Regulatory Management Branch), focuses efforts on early disease detection and control in the interests of food safety and industry competitiveness. SAF is in discussion with federal counterparts to join the federal Food Safety Initiative, along with five other provinces. Programs developed under this initiative will replace the previously announced Food Safety Training Program, ensuring a more consistent approach with national food safety training.
- SAF responded to the impact of the Natural Health Products (NHP) Regulations on the Saskatchewan industry by:
 - Offering a one day Natural Ingredients, Packaging and Processing Seminar in September 2005; and,
 - Developing generic Good Manufacturing Practices models for NHP's at the Food Centre which will be available for industry implementation in time to meet the December 2005 deadline
- Training initiatives: SAF continues to offer Hazard Analysis Critical Control Point training and Good Manufacturing Practices through the Food Centre and through a partnership with SIAST the distance based food safety training program (Processing Food Safely) was successfully launched in September 2004. SAF through staff at the Food Centre provides ongoing technical review of all food safety training programs

- Food Safety and Environment chapters of APF.
- SAF restructuring in April 2004, has led to the creation of the Agri-Business Development Branch where the Manager, Environmental Programs now deals exclusively with the delivery of environmental programming in Saskatchewan. Program areas include: Green Cover, Beneficial Management Practices, Environmental Farm Plans, Evaluation, Communication and other items such as certification and standards.

Saskatchewan Environment is working with other departments to improve conservation lands strategies with Saskatchewan Stock Growers Association, Agricultural Producers Association Saskatchewan, SARM and environmental non government organization's to ensure that the activities of conservation groups work in harmony with the rural economy.

F --13 Collaborates with organized labour and industry to review and/or establish the measures necessary to create a positive, competitive and progressive labour environment including a fair, equitable and effective worker's compensation program in Saskatchewan.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan Labour continues to work with business, labour, and other stakeholders towards ensuring a safe, fair, productive, equitable, harmonious and family-friendly work environment, and workers' compensation system.
- Moreover, in undertaking any new legislative, program, service or review-related initiative, the department embarks on broad-based consultations to responsibly capture and weigh its constituents' positions at the developmental stage.
- This remains under active examination by the Employment Subcommittee of ACRE.

F – 14 Actively encourage immigrant producers that have experience in growing products which take full advantage of irrigation opportunities.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SAF has increased both the human and financial resources that are working to market the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program in foreign markets. Efforts have been mainly focused in the UK, and Netherlands because, according to Statistics Canada analysis, new rural immigrants to Canada have traditionally come from Western Europe and that is expected to continue. As well, the types of skills required to broaden and deepen the rural economy are found in these two markets (e.g., livestock, irrigation, special crops, value-added and distribution). SAF has a strategy in these two markets which includes: targeted advertising in the farm press; presentations at agriculture schools; in-person meetings with farmers; booths at immigration trade shows in both countries; provision of marketing materials as support to Saskatchewan realtors promoting their services; provision of agronomic information; and assistance with planning to incoming farmers visiting Saskatchewan.
- The province is opening the provincial nominee program (SINP) which will do away with specific skill categories and make it easier for immigrants to access employment opportunities in any sector and for rural Saskatchewan employers to recruit immigrant employees.
- The province is working with business, industry and the agricultural sector to address specific skill shortages and encouraging immigrants with those skills to move to Saskatchewan through the SINP. This program now includes a new category – Farmer/Owner-Operator that will allow recruitment of foreign farmers having experience in areas such as irrigation.

F – 15 Establishes the Saskatchewan Opportunities Foundation to provide funding of grants, loan guarantees, scholarship and leadership training through public and private funds, private investment/tax credits and revisions to the PST.

- No action taken.

F – 16 Develops and leads an Agri-business Investment Strategy that includes:

- Developing existing and attracting new agri-business in the province; and
- Establishing Business Assistance Teams to assist firms with location analysis, accessing equity and debt financing, navigating the regulatory requirements, determining/negotiating business costs (i.e., utilities, accessing programs and overall problem solving).

Government Response/Example(s):

- SAF created an Agri-Business Development Branch. The Agri-Business Development Branch works with communities to define their agri-business development goals and to align their by-laws with their development strategies in order to attract the type of agri-business development they desire. Agri-Business Development Specialists provide service support to communities and business proponents through all stages of project development. This includes providing advice and guidance on financing options and on understanding and achieving regulatory requirements for their business venture. In doing this, SAF (the Agri-Business Development Branch) and SIR (Strategic Sector Development Branch) will ensure a close working relationship is maintained.
- SAF, SIR and Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership are actively involved in developing investment attraction activities in the province.

F – 17 Works co-operatively at all levels with Aboriginal people (First Nations, Métis, and Non-status) to foster a shared understanding of our vision for the province.

Government Response/Example(s):

- First Nations and Metis Relations works with Aboriginal people and communities to develop and implement policies and programs that advance shared interests and increase the participation of Aboriginal people in the social and economic life of Saskatchewan. The Province has developed a shared vision for Métis and Off-Reserve First Nations People by integrating action by 12 provincial departments to address education, skills training, work preparation, employment and economic development, and individual and community well-

being for Aboriginal people in the province.

The province proclaimed *The Métis Act* in January 2002, and signed a MOU with the Métis Nation–Saskatchewan to implement practical initiatives.

F – 18 Engaging the Aboriginal people in the work force that includes expansion of Aboriginal ownership of businesses either from a First Nations’ owned business view or in partnership with the private sector.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan links the Aboriginal labour force with employers and training institutions through the Aboriginal Employment Development Program.
- In October, 2005 the provincial government announced a program that makes grants available to Aboriginal business entrepreneurs who want to get involved in growth sectors of Saskatchewan’s economy, helping to create more Aboriginal businesses and creating jobs for Aboriginal people. The Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis Economic Development Program is a four-year \$5 million package beginning with \$500,000 this fiscal year and \$1,500,000 in the next three fiscal years. Applicants will be required to inject some of their own funding into their project. This new program supports the province’s Action Plan for the Economy which includes working with First Nations and Métis people to equip and engage them in broadening the economy.
- Through government support of the Clarence Campeau Development Fund, Métis entrepreneurs acquire the management, administrative and marketing skills necessary for business development.
- Saskatchewan worked in partnership with Saskatchewan Council on Community Development to establish a Rural Leadership Development Program that places an increased emphasis on Aboriginal people, with a goal of involving Aboriginal women and youth.
- SIR is looking for opportunities for Aboriginal Partnerships and involvement in its sector strategies and an Aboriginal Procurement Committee established in June 2004, is intended to help Aboriginal-owned businesses.

- The Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nation's Corporate Circle provides focus, planning, training and partnerships to create economic development for First Nations, business and government.

F – 19 Implementing policies that encourage the private and public sector to forge partnerships with Aboriginal organizations.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan has many partnerships with Aboriginal people involving the education, justice, social service, economic, environment, and health sectors. For example, the school in Meadow Lake is a partnership effort between a First Nation, the school division and federal government for the benefit of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students.
- The Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nation's Corporate Circle provides focus, planning, training and partnerships to create economic development for First Nations, business, and government.
- Other partnership examples include the Agreement on Economic Development between the province and the Métis Nation - Saskatchewan, MOUs with First Nations regarding management of natural resources including co-management agreements, partnerships with individual Bands to co-manage schools, and individual partnerships with Indian family and child service agencies to deliver social services.
- Tourism Saskatchewan and the FSIN have signed a protocol agreement that outlines a process of cooperation with regard to the development of First Nations tourism opportunities.
- Industry Canada has provided funding to KCDC from La Ronge as the Regional Management Organization to deliver the First Nations SchoolNet Program in both Saskatchewan and Alberta. This project is positioned within a multi-year strategic plan to provide First Nation schools with computers, high speed internet access, technical support and ICT training in order to allow First Nation students to pursue new opportunities for learning and skills development within their own communities.

F – 20 Initiates discussions with the Government of Canada, the FSIN and the Métis Nation - Saskatchewan to provide mechanisms for Aboriginal people and their communities to access federal programs and

services initiated at the provincial level.

Government Response/Example(s):

- See F-18 and F-19 and F-21.

F – 21 Begins the process of removing barriers to provincial programs and initiatives that prevent First Nations participation.

Government Response/Example(s):

- With input from sector partners, Saskatchewan has implemented a Post-Secondary Sector Aboriginal Education and Training Action Plan. This Action Plan is designed to improve Aboriginal people's access to, and success in, post secondary education, training, and employment.
- Saskatchewan Health is working to improve the access to provincial health programs/services for Aboriginal people, as well as increase Aboriginal representation in health system governance and administration. Some examples include:
 - Increasing resources to address health concerns in Aboriginal communities, including hiring an Aboriginal Diabetes Consultant.
 - Regional Health authorities will work with First Nations communities as they develop their regional plans for the delivery of on-going coordinated education, care and treatment services for the control of diabetes.
 - SIAST will be provided with one-time funding to develop a multi-leveled diabetes education program.
 - Increasing Aboriginal representation on health governance structures through the board appointment process.
 - Established two regional health authorities in the North.
 - Train more health providers, offer more return service bursaries, support professional development and a representative workforce.
 - Build opportunities for full participation by Aboriginal peoples, and strive to recruit Aboriginal candidates into a wide range of health-related occupations.
 - Enhance educational programs available in the North.

- Invest in cultural awareness training to encourage a supportive welcoming workplace environment.
- Through the Aboriginal Employment Development Program, First Nations and Métis Relations has entered into over 60 partnerships with private and public sector employers, universities, training institutions, governments and First Nations and Metis organizations to address barriers to employment and communicate employment and education opportunities to Aboriginal people.

F – 22 Establishes and implements targeted, set aside policies for Aboriginal providers of goods and services.

- SaskEnergy does not adhere to specific set-aside policies. However, all of our formal tender documents (>\$10,000) request Aboriginal content from vendors. SaskEnergy maintains statistics of Aboriginal vendors, Aboriginal bidders, and awards to Aboriginal businesses and has established formal annual targets for Aboriginal content which are reported quarterly to the CIC.

F – 23 Promotes careers in the trades in order to provide a greater number of skilled professionals to the various sectors of the economy.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SaskNetWork.ca is a comprehensive provincial web site that helps Saskatchewan residents find information about career, education, training, labour market opportunities, and links to other national and international sites.
- The ATCC Board's Mandate is to ensure that apprenticeship training meets industry's labour market needs. This includes promotion and awareness of careers in the trades.
- ATCC field consultants and staff participate in approximately 135 high school career fairs, industry trade shows, and public information sessions across Saskatchewan to promote the trades.
- Tourism Saskatchewan works closely with ATCC to promote the trades we have; specifically, the Food &

Beverage Person and Guest Services Representative.

- Skills Canada Saskatchewan promotes trades and technology to Saskatchewan youth.
- This remains under active examination by the Employment Subcommittee of ACRE.
- SaskEnergy emphasizes trades and technical positions as career options at high school career fairs around the province and uses a CDROM created by the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship Branch to promote the trades. The CD was provided to all Guidance Counselors in Saskatchewan in spring 2005.

SaskEnergy is working with its diversity partners to achieve greater diversity within our trades and to better draw youth into these roles. We are working towards building a pool of prequalified people from various backgrounds and locations who are ready to assume positions as they become available.

Through CIC, all the crowns are collaborating to develop and prioritize initiatives related to our common demographics - trades are one specific area of interest.

F – 24 Identifies and provides opportunities for businesses to assess and build their entrepreneurial, leadership, and management skills in areas of confidence building, entrepreneurial spirit, global vision, and knowledge in financing and marketing.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan worked in partnership with SCCD to establish a Rural Leadership Development Program that places an increased emphasis on women, Aboriginal people, and youth.
- SIR has promoted world class manufacturing best practices to both rural and urban manufacturers and processors. Efforts by the department have led to the development of three consortiums of manufacturing excellence which strive to adopt best practices and improve the competitiveness of their operations.
- This remains under active examination by the Business Development Subcommittee of ACRE.

F – 25 Expand distance education through technology so that options for learning can be made available to school children who face extended busing on a daily basis; and so that post secondary students and adults can receive further education or training.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Through Campus Saskatchewan, institutions are working together to give students more flexibility to take courses and to complete the requirements for credentials online. This program provides distance learning opportunities from Saskatchewan's post-secondary institutions, delivering courses through alternative methods including the Internet, SCN Interactive Television and off-campus classes. A searchable course catalogue is available online at www.CampusSaskatchewan.ca. Campus Saskatchewan enhances a student's ability to pursue post-secondary education by bringing the campus to students, no matter where they live.
- Saskatchewan has moved ahead with providing affordable, high speed Internet access through CommunityNet to 366 communities, educational institutions, libraries and health facilities across the province. CommunityNet began initial connections to K-12 schools in June 1, 2001. As of December 2004, all schools and division offices have been connected, and those connected via satellite now have two-way service. Regional colleges are also on CommunityNet, and many of the public libraries – opening additional access points to all learners.

F – 26 Utilizes the expertise of local people and the availability of local private sector facilities in the delivery of education programs where such expertise and facilities are not readily available within the education system.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan has a well-developed regional college system that utilizes the expertise of local people and the local private sector facilities where such expertise and facilities are not readily available within the education system.

- Saskatchewan Learning's Community Schools Program provides additional resources and supports to schools serving significant numbers of vulnerable students and families. In the last few years, the government has doubled the number of Community Schools. There are now 98 funded Community Schools provincially in urban, rural, and northern communities, encompassing elementary and secondary schools.

F – 27 Engages the Department of Education, Department of Economic and Co-operative Development, the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, the Saskatchewan Teacher's Federation, Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN), and the Métis Nation - Saskatchewan among others, in the development and implementation of a curriculum component for the primary and secondary system that is dedicated to business/entrepreneurship education.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Entrepreneurship 30 is included under the PAA renewal process. Entrepreneurship 30 is an elective course that may be used as one of the required PAA components. It is typically offered as an elective for Grade 12 students. Entrepreneurship 30 has a strong enrolment with an excess of 1200 students. The renewal of this curriculum was enhanced by cooperation with the University of Regina, Women Entrepreneurs of Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership, as well as through the use of resources from many other provincial and federal agencies.
- The PAA curricula include a focus on 10 Transition to Work Dimensions, one of which is entrepreneurship. These dimensions are expected to be addressed in the entire PAA courses.
- Through the Métis and Off-reserve Strategy, efforts are being taken to ensure business/entrepreneurship training in cooperation with the FSIN and Métis Nation of Saskatchewan.
- Government recognizes the importance of entrepreneurs as a driving force in our economy and that First Nation and Métis people are an integral part of that force.
- Government is discussing the importance of business entrepreneurship, education and training with all stakeholders and partners in the educational system and will continue to implement strategies that will enhance partnerships in these areas.

F – 28 Increases resources available for training people for a career in agriculture and rural businesses.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Although currently not funded, Saskatchewan has entered into a MOU with the University of Saskatchewan and the FSIN to develop new agricultural training programs.
- In November 2002, Saskatchewan entered into a two year agreement (\$50,000 per year) to support the Veterinary Medical Association's efforts to develop a mentorship program to support the number of rural veterinarians.
- Agriculture 20 is offered as a credit class by the Saskatchewan Government Correspondence School. In 2004-05, a total of 83 students, including two adults, were enrolled in this course.
- In partnership with Saskatchewan Regional Colleges, SIAST and the Universities, the Canadian Agriculture Skills Service was launched in late summer 2004, to provide financial and planning support for Saskatchewan farmers and their spouses.

F – 29 Provides funding for comprehensive community-based leadership training to build local capacity to position the community for change (easily accessible and builds on existing modules/programs).

Government Response/Example(s):

- An education and training partnership between government and the municipal sector has been established to develop training programs for administrators and elected officials.
- Saskatchewan provided \$90,000 to SCCD to facilitate further development and delivery of a Rural Leadership Development Program that places an increased emphasis on women, Aboriginal people, and youth.

- SAF formed an Agri-business Development Branch to foster community capacity building.
- In 2004, SIR partnered with the Saskatchewan Economic Developers Association (SEDA) to deliver workshops throughout Saskatchewan on the community capacities needed for *Investment Readiness and Business Attraction*. SIR has previously worked on community capacity development initiatives such as *Project Management for Community Projects*, and *Business Retention and Expansion Initiatives*. Further, SEDA (sponsored by SIR) is delivering basic economic development training modules to SARM and SUMA memberships.

F – 30 Utilizes existing resources to establish a “Venture Management initiative” that would match experienced managers with new or expanding agri-businesses.

Government Response/Example(s):

- This remains under active examination by the Business Development Subcommittee of ACRE.
- SIR and RD continue to move forward and work with several partners in developing a "Business Mentorship" initiative.

F – 31 Develops a plan for infrastructure built around key irrigation sites such as, but not limited to, Lake Diefenbaker, the Rafferty and Alameda Reservoirs and the South Saskatchewan River that includes synchronized public and private investment.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The provincial government recognizes the importance of developing a plan around infrastructure, and departments have been engaging in discussions on this issue.
- The province is working with the federal government through the Canada-Saskatchewan Water Supply Expansion Program to identify the feasibility of irrigation infill and expansion opportunities.

- The federal and provincial governments are working together to initiate the development of a federal/provincial water-based economic development agreement that aligns emerging federal and provincial strategies.
- SaskWater expects to work with SAF in 2006 to provide input into the development of a comprehensive, provincial irrigation strategy.

F – 32 Invests in the infrastructure that is needed to accompany agricultural producers in transition into new sectors which may include:

- Encouraging development of related sectors along logical corridors;
- Providing financial support for water development for livestock operations, incorporating necessary environmental principles of sustainability, health and safety; and
- Providing financial assistance through loans or incentives for development of necessary facilities for livestock or specialized crops (vegetables, herbs, organics, berries, etc.) (FIFS, page 17).

Government Response/Example(s):

See I - 1
See F – 43

F – 33 Develops and implements a strategy that integrates the road, rail and air services in the province to support business development and includes working with municipal governments to improve the co-ordination and integration of planning for permanent municipal road and provincial highway systems.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The most recent DHT Strategic Plan incorporated an intermodal component.
- Saskatchewan is committed to working collaboratively with Area Transportation Planning Committees in order to address regional planning needs.
- As a result of a review by GR of municipal road issues in the heavy oil producing area of Saskatchewan, in 2003 amendments were made to *The Rural Municipality Act, 1989* to provide authority for all rural municipalities to designate primary weights and truck routes for municipal roads. The new authorities provide for harmonization among rural municipalities and with provincial standards, as well as a dispute resolution process when a municipality or municipalities and road users cannot agree to the method of harmonizing weight limits or designated truck routes. The dispute resolution will help to ensure continuity of transportation routes across jurisdictions. Under the new *Municipalities Act*, effective January 2006, urban municipalities will have the same authorities. The new *Act* will also allow urban municipalities to enter into road maintenance agreements, similar to rural municipalities.
- GR, RD, and HT are assisting SARM/SUMA in its review of rural economic impediments under its “Clearing the Path” initiative. As part of this initiative, SARM is working to establish a primary weight road network.

F – 34 Ensures the installation of three-phase power, gas, and telephone and lines to rural Saskatchewan.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Government will continue to maintain and enhance its 23,000 kilometre of three-phase power lines, 115,000 kilometre of single phase power lines and its 65,000 kilometre of natural gas distribution pipelines for businesses and communities to ensure it can meet load growth across the province as rural areas develop.

- In rural Saskatchewan only five communities with more than 200 people do not currently have natural gas service. Each of those communities has been offered service in the past and declined. Ninety three per cent of all residences have, or have access to, natural gas service.

F – 35 Provides access to high-speed phone lines and cellular coverage in order to keep pace with new technology.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SaskTel has invested \$24 million to increase digital cell phone coverage to additional Saskatchewan communities. By 2003, digital cellular service was available to more than 90 per cent of Saskatchewan's population, serving more than 270,000 square kilometres.
- In March 2002, SaskTel announced the expansion of its High Speed Internet service to 191 more Saskatchewan communities over the next two years under the province's CommunityNet high speed internet initiative.
- In June 2004, the second phase of CommunityNet was launched. An additional 71 communities are being added to the network. As well, most farmsteads and businesses within 30 kilometres of many existing CommunityNet centres will be able to access SaskTel's commercial high-speed network.
- The Federal Government has made available \$7.5 million from BRAND (Broadband for Rural and Northern Development), \$2 million from the Northern Development Accord and \$525,000 from the federal/provincial WEPA over the past two years to fund Broadband (high speed internet) in Saskatchewan. The majority of benefactors live in rural, northern and Aboriginal communities. They also provide \$5 million for the first phase of CommunityNet and an additional \$2.25 million to connect all the libraries to high speed internet.

F – 36 Adopts an aggressive policy towards irrigation development that expands utilization of the current irrigation system and further development in order to open new areas for diversified agricultural growth.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Changes to *The Irrigation Act* are being completed, which will allow irrigation districts to use alternative means to expand infrastructure.
- See F – 31 for further examples.

F – 37 Develops options that ensure a practical and economically feasible water treatment, distribution and wastewater management infrastructure in the province.

Government Response/Examples(s):

- Government's Safe Drinking Water Strategy includes: better regulations, protection of source waters, and improved water treatment infrastructure.
- As part of the strategy, SaskWater was restructured and received a new mandate. The new SaskWater was established October 1, 2002 with the proclamation of *The Saskatchewan Water Corporation Act (2002)*. Through this *Act*, SaskWater became a fully commercial CIC Crown corporation providing competitively-priced, customer-focused, quality water and wastewater services to Saskatchewan First Nations, industries, municipalities and rural water groups.
- In addition, SaskWater operates and maintains community-owned systems under contract and partners with communities and the private sector to design and build regional water supply systems (i.e., pipelines).
- In July 2005, following consultations involving municipalities, the Department of Western Economic Diversification Canada, Infrastructure Canada, Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration, GR and SaskWater, the Government of Canada announced funding of \$27.3 million (provided through the Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund, for the development of regional water supply systems in Saskatchewan.
- SaskWater has begun discussions with several Saskatchewan communities to develop and implement project plans that meet the program's guidelines. Potential projects are selected based on their expected contribution to providing highly-reliable, secure, quality water source to rural communities; reducing barriers to expanding regional economic development opportunities; and meeting the federal government's commitment to provide safe, clean drinking water to First Nations communities.
- Saskatchewan Health is involved in the following initiatives:
 - Saskatchewan Health is working with regional health authorities to develop a database that will capture information (such as location, owner/operator, source type, treatments and test information) related to public water supplies regulated under Saskatchewan Health's *Health Hazard Regulations*.
 - Saskatchewan Health is working to develop a provincial water-borne disease investigation protocol.

F – 38 Establishes the legislative, regulatory and policy framework that is consistent and fair and that encourages the sustainable non-traditional and, where possible, multi-use of Crown lands for the benefit of rural residents and that leases issued contain clauses allowing for integrated multiple uses by the lease owner.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SAF has consulted with the Crown Lands Stakeholders' Forum, a group of individuals representing clients and Saskatchewan residents having an interest in agricultural Crown land use.

F – 39 In conjunction with local governments, develops a land use planning process that takes a balanced approach to land management in the province and establishes fair and consistent rules with respect to land use for the province.

Government Response/Example(s):

- As part of phase two of the renewal of the planning legislation, GR is reviewing *The Planning and Development Act, 1983* to enhance local capacity, achieve consistency in land use planning and balance local, regional and provincial interests. Greater opportunities for inter-municipal and regional approaches to planning will be established in the legislation to achieve greater consistency in land use and local planning and to support provincial interests.
- GR is providing advisory support to SARM on matters supporting consistent zoning rules for intensive livestock operations and is a participant in advising the Great Sand Hills Planning District, which is a model for inter-municipal planning.
- GR, RD, and HT are assisting SARM in its review of rural economic impediments under its "Clearing the Path" initiative. SARM is working to establish sector specific planning commissions.

F – 40 Creates a Rural Opportunities Office to develop and implement a long term, comprehensive, action plan for rural Saskatchewan.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Rural Revitalization Office was created. The Office was transferred to SAFRR and has been renamed the Rural Issues Office.
- The government produced a provincial rural strategy titled “A Strategy for Rural Saskatchewan: Responding to ACRE” in 2002.
- The government created an Interdepartmental Working Group and Steering Committee, chaired respectively by the Director of Rural Issues Office and the Assistant Deputy Minister responsible for rural revitalization, to coordinate the delivery of the Rural Strategy across government.

F – 41 Encourages and enables the emergence of “Opportunity Regions” from the grassroots in rural Saskatchewan to alleviate the multiplicity of regional boundaries and to foster community and economic development.

- ***As part of this process***, it is recommended that the province establish a voluntary program that encourages municipalities in a region to co-operate in a Reeves-mayor’s council similar to that initiated under the Regional Parks Program. For example, under this program, the council could qualify for assistance (financial and technical) to establish a co-ordinating office and co-ordinating opportunities fund.
- It is also recommended that the Government of Saskatchewan along with the Government of Canada examine the concept of developing co-terminus boundaries as a means to create a more conducive and comprehensive environment for their service delivery and rural community and economic development.

Government Response/Example(s):

- GR, RD, and HT are assisting SARM in its review of rural economic impediments under its “Clearing the Path” initiative. SARM’s proposals for sector specific planning commissions and a primary weight road network will facilitate inter-municipal cooperation.

- The new *Municipalities Act*, effective January 2006, will help to enable better community cooperation and establish a standard set of principles and procedures common to rural and smaller urban municipalities in the province.
- ACRE Infrastructure Subcommittee made a recommendation related to a regional approach to provision of infrastructure. See recommendation P-18

F – 42 Conducts a review of the programs implemented in Ireland to assist in the development of business start-ups to determine the applicability of the programs to rural Saskatchewan.

Government Response/Example(s):

- From examining reports on economic development processes in Ireland, government found that substantial differences exist between the two jurisdictions (i.e. Ireland and Saskatchewan). Population and the fact that Ireland is a member nation of the EU are key differences.
As well, other factors for success include currency depreciation, EU subsidies, market access to the EU, foreign direct investment, tax reductions, regulatory reform, a more uniformly skilled and educated work force, and “social pacts” between industry, labour and government aimed, among other things, at providing stable labour-management relations.

F – 43 Moves forward on the development of a feeding industry to complement the grains and oilseeds sector by ensuring that financing, regulatory impediments, environmental sensitivity and leadership are addressed.

Government Response/Example(s):

- See I-1.
- BSE Recovery Programs:
 - The Saskatchewan government responded to the BSE crisis by offer a number of programs to help Saskatchewan beef and other ruminant producers cope with the challenges presented by the US border closure.

- In 2003, Saskatchewan delivered the Slaughter Element and Packer Incentive Element of the federal-provincial BSE Recovery Program.
 - In addition, the province also delivered several provincial only programs including the Saskatchewan Fed Livestock Competitive Market Adjustment Program, the Saskatchewan Set-aside Program and the Saskatchewan Cull Animal Program.
 - Saskatchewan also assisted the federal government by delivering the Federal Cull Animal Program in Saskatchewan.
 - In 2004-05, Saskatchewan participated in the third wave of programming which included the Canada-Saskatchewan Feeder Calf Set-aside Program and the Canada-Saskatchewan Fed Cattle Set-aside Program. These program were designed to delay the finishing (and slaughter) of a portion of the provinces cattle in order to better match fed cattle supply with slaughter capacity and therefore help to support market prices
 - Also in 2004-05, Saskatchewan provided support to “other” ruminant producers through the Other Ruminant Industry Transition Program – this was a provincial-only initiative.
- Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation offers a Forage Rainfall Insurance Program for native forage and tame grazing acres. This program has provided coverage on an average of 2.5 million acres over the last four years and 8.5 million in indemnities has been paid to customers over this same time period.
 - Under APF, the environmental chapter promotes the adoption of best management practices on farms. Federal – provincial governments have been working together to develop beneficial management practices (BMP). Farmers who completed their environmental farm plans are eligible to apply for BMP incentive funding under the Canada-Saskatchewan Farm Stewardship Program. Application dates for the first year of the program are May 1, June 1, and August 1, 2005, and February 1, 2006.

F – 44 Expands efforts to facilitate increased forage production.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Conservation Cover Program provided financial incentives for farmers to convert marginal cropland into forage. Over a three year period (2001, 2002 and 2003), the program contributed over \$14 million to assist in the conversion of 1.3 million acres to perennial cover. The Conservation Cover Program ended in 2003-04.

- The federal Green Cover Program is now in place.
- The government provides applied research funding to the WBDC.
- Through ADF, government invests money in forage research.
- In addition to multi-peril crop insurance offered for a number of forage crops, Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation offers a Forage Rainfall Insurance Program for native forage and tame grazing acres. New initiatives for forage crops for 2005 include:
 - Forage Diversification Option – Uses a proxy crop approach to insure forage crops not insurable under the regular multi-peril program.
 - Greenfeed Establishment Benefit – Provides coverage for annual cereal crops that fail to establish.
 - Timothy Hay – Pilot insurance program offered on irrigated timothy hay intended for export.

F – 45 Ensures a broad based organic strategy is developed.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SAF provided \$500,000 (four-year project) to fund the Organic Trade and Market Analyst position at the University of Saskatchewan. The project assists in developing accreditation/certification systems and marketing research, providing benefit to Saskatchewan’s organic industry.
- SAF has provided a grant of \$250,000 to the OACC, allowing the OACC Prairie Office to continue its research and extension efforts in Saskatchewan for the next five years.
- In September 2004, SAF, AAFC and Saskatchewan Trade and Export Partnership co-hosted an EU Trade Mission featuring four European countries. Buyers from these countries were able to meet directly with Saskatchewan organic marketers and exporters.

F – 46 Assists in the industry-driven establishment and implementation of a national accreditation system for the organic sector.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SAF will support the work of the federal government in their efforts to maintain access to EU markets. SAF will support and monitor the development of the national standard and accreditation system, to be in a position to respond to any requirements for provincial involvement.
- SAF and AAFC co-hosted a regulatory consultation meeting with AAFC and Canadian Food Inspection Agency officials and the Saskatchewan organic industry in March of 2004. Consultation was in regard to the national regulation of organic standards.

F – 47 Utilizes agricultural Crown land as a tool to enhance the livestock industry

- **Encouraging the conversion of marginal cultivated agricultural Crown land to perennial forage;**
- **Examining the development of an infrastructure program that would provide Crown land tenants the means to construct required facilities on lands being converted to perennial forage; and**
- **Change current Crown land use policy to maximize potential whether through sales or lease.**

Government Response/Example(s):

- SAF allows individual lessees the ability to make their own enterprise decisions unless those decisions result in improper agricultural practice. Where lessees choose to seed their marginal land to perennial forage, SAF facilitates these requests and adjust rentals accordingly.
- Since the latest ACRE recommendation, SAF is developing and enhanced sale policy for consideration by government.

F – 48 Expands Livestock Loan Guarantee Program (bison females, feedlot program, expanded dollars in existing program).

Government Response/Example(s):

- The loan guarantee limit has now been increased to \$70 million from \$65 million in 2003-04 and from \$60 million in 2002-03.
- Given the uncertainty created by the BSE crisis, female bison have not been added as an eligible commodity under the Livestock Loan Guarantee Program. This issue will be revisited once the industry stabilizes or the border reopens to live bison exports
- See Response I - 1.

F – 49 Develops a central registry of available service providers and producers' demand for services to facilitate a more effective use of agriculture resources.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Currently, there are a number of different public and private internet websites and service providers that provide this information and service (e.g., feed and forage listing service at SAF website, SCCD).
- Government has taken no additional action.

F – 50 Examines available options for assisting producers such as loan guarantees in other areas, interest subsidies or tax incentives for those in transition to sustainable production systems.

Government Response/Example(s):

- See I-1.
- See F - 43 for BSE Recovery Programs.
- The Federal/Provincial/Territorial, APF Renewal Program was launched in Saskatchewan on October 1, 2004. This program includes new programming to support effective business planning and to improve access to skills development and learning which contribute to the development of successful business ventures and increased

income for farm families in rural Saskatchewan.

F – 51 Provides linkages between producers and technical expertise on market information, market access and development issues.

Government Response/Example(s)

- The Agriculture Applied Research Management (Agri-ARM) program conducts producer-driven research and development projects in rural Saskatchewan near eight communities – Canora, Redvers, Indian Head, Melfort, Scott, Prince Albert, Swift Current, and Rosthern.
- SAF set-up the AKC in Moose Jaw as the first point of inquiry for both technical and general agriculture inquiries. The AKC is staffed by 14 people including four resource agents, eight specialists, an office administrator and a manager. Specialist positions provide top end expertise related to crops, livestock, forages, and business management. The AKC can be accessed by toll-free telephone, fax or e-mail.
- SAF has established nine Agriculture Business Centres (ABCs) throughout the province to meet regional agriculture development needs. These offices are located at: Prince Albert, Saskatoon, Yorkton, Regina, Swift Current, Outlook, North Battleford, Tisdale, and Weyburn.
In each of these centres, a team of specialists (agri-business development, livestock, crops and forages, and regional business planning specialists) are available to help individuals and communities build on opportunities for agriculturally-based economic development. They focus on providing leadership and expertise to agri-entrepreneurs and communities in the areas of applying new technology to operations, business development processes, and capacity building. This is done through building partnerships with people and agencies in order to help clients expand, change or start an agriculture-related business.

F – 52 Explores the concept of “business clusters” for the rural manufacturing and construction sector.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Cluster initiatives are progressing well in several parts of Saskatchewan. Examples of successful initiatives include the Swift Current and Moose Jaw Regions. Capacity Exchange Pilot Program in Humboldt is another example of how manufacturers from a regional cluster in rural Saskatchewan share their excess capacity.
- The ACRE Infrastructure Subcommittee, as part of its mandate, is examining the opportunities for economic clusters in Saskatchewan.
- The new website - www.capacityexchange.ca was launched in June 2005, to enable businesses to trade excess labour hours, machine hours, design hours, materials, and transportation with other Saskatchewan businesses. The site is a partnership of the Carlton Trail Regional Economic Development Authority and the Saskatchewan Economic Developers Association.

F – 53 Promotes the rural manufacturing and construction sector to the people of Saskatchewan explaining about its contribution to the community.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Manufacturing Team of SIR continues to promote the rural manufacturing and construction area through attendance at strategic trade shows and by working closely with the sector on opportunities for growth and expansion.

F – 54 Enhances the province's emergency services to provide rural residents with effective emergency services and speedy access that will ensure delivery of primary health care facilities and services on a co-ordinate, integrated and multi-disciplinary team basis.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Action Plan for Saskatchewan Health Care identified a number of priority initiatives towards the integration of primary health care services. Since the Action Plan was released, significant work related to the development

of primary health care in Saskatchewan has been undertaken, including:

- Developing primary health care teams and integrated services linked by networks throughout the province. There are now currently 35 primary health care sites across the province. Work continues on development of standards for primary health care networks in the areas of access and program requirements.
 - Regional health authorities have enhanced capacity to develop and support primary health care teams.
 - Continued work with the Saskatchewan Medical Association to develop model contracts for family physicians working in a primary care setting.
 - As part of the 2003 national Health Accord, Saskatchewan has committed to ensuring that at least 50 per cent of its population will have access to an appropriate health care provider, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, as soon as possible (within eight years at the latest.)
 - Saskatchewan people have access to a 24 hour telephone advice line for immediate and reliable health advice. Healthline is a 24 hour a day, seven days a week health advice and information telephone line that was launched in August 2003. It is an innovative, efficient way to ensure that residents across the province have immediate access to health advice. In the first eighteen months of operation, over 110,000 calls have been managed from every health region in the province.
- The Action Plan for Saskatchewan Health Care also outlined a number of key actions that will enhance the province's emergency services to provide rural residents with effective emergency services including:
 - providing more training to EMS providers;
 - improving response times, particularly in isolated areas; and,
 - improving dispatch of ambulance services.

F – 55 Invests significantly in research aimed at reducing fuel consumption and development of alternative fuel sources.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan's Greenprint on Ethanol Production will stimulate investment in ethanol fuel and byproducts that in turn will support increased livestock development.

- Saskatchewan has become the first province in Canada to establish the legal framework to allow for mandating an ethanol blend in gasoline sold in the province.
- Saskatchewan has established an Office of Energy Conservation.
- SAFRR has provided technical support to Milligan Bio-Tech in Foam Lake for bio-diesel development.
- SaskPower, through its Green Power Portfolio, is pursuing wind and environmentally preferred power supplies. In 2003/04 Sask Power provided \$10.2 million for expansion of the Cypress wind facility.
- SaskEnergy has partnered with SaskPower to demonstrate flare gas conservation and conversion to electricity using micro turbines and to demonstrate distributed generation opportunities for institutional applications
- SaskEnergy has conducted research into the conversion of forest and agricultural residues into synthetic natural gas.
- SaskEnergy began offering prime rate loans in July 2001, through the SaskEnergy Network to encourage customers to use more energy efficient natural gas appliances. With Natural Resources Canada (NRCAN) participation beginning in December 2002, the focus of the program became ENERGY STAR qualified furnaces and boilers. To date, SaskEnergy has assisted over 11,500 customers with up to \$45.4 million in loans for more energy efficient equipment.
- From September 2004 to March 2005, SaskEnergy assisted over 1,550 customers in choosing ENERGY STAR qualified heating equipment, saving them an estimated \$1.6 million in energy and borrowing costs and reducing greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 3,400 tonnes per year. With the support of both NRCAN and SaskPower, the ENERGY STAR Loan Program is running again from August 15, 2005 - March 31, 2006, for ENERGY STAR qualified furnaces with high efficiency motors.
- SaskEnergy also offers an online Home Energy Audit, and supports the EnerGuide for Houses program with a SaskEnergy billing option, both of which are focused on helping consumers conserve energy and use energy more efficiently.

F – 56 In conjunction with all provincial associations/organizations and media, develops and commits to an action plan that builds positive attitudes and promotes the attributes of rural Saskatchewan.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan has more than 12,000 non-profit organizations and 5,000 incorporated charities all drive by a vibrant volunteer community. The positive attitudes that volunteers bring to their tasks enriches the lives of rural Saskatchewan residents. The Premier's Voluntary Sector Initiative was established in 2002. It works to strengthen the relationship between government and Saskatchewan's voluntary sector to assist volunteer organizations in effectively fulfilling their mandates.
- Organized the Premier's Centennial Summit in January 2005, which provided a major forum for business, labour, community, First Nations and Métis, and youth leaders to celebrate Saskatchewan's economic successes and explore our future challenges and opportunities.
- The Saskatchewan Dream (which ran from 2001 to 2003).
- Growing the Future
- Saskatchewan's *Our Future is Wide Open* campaign was launched in November 2002, to improve the perception both inside and outside the Province of Saskatchewan as a good place to live, work, invest, and do business.
- Ongoing sponsorship of Rotary's *Your Future is Here* campaign aimed at encouraging Saskatchewan young people to make their career in Saskatchewan.
- Marketing campaign to promote the young entrepreneur component of the SBLA program in rural Saskatchewan was launched in October 2004.
- While many initiatives have been undertaken, a coordinated strategy still needs to be developed.

F – 57 Invests a maximum amount of available government dollars into publicly accessible applied research

and development that will provide the greatest benefits in opportunity areas, education and technology transfer for the industry.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan funds approximately \$120 million in research and development initiatives on an annual basis. This funding is made available to the University of Saskatchewan, federal institutions, industry and research institutions such as the Prairie Swine Centre, Prairie Agricultural Machinery Institute, Western Beef Development Centre and Veterinary Infectious Disease Organization to carry out research activities that address food and non-food processing, value added, the livestock and crop sectors, and the organic industry.
- The Agriculture Applied Research Management (Agri-ARM) program conducts producer-driven research.
- The Saskatchewan Forestry Centre.
- The Saskatchewan Petroleum Technology Research Centre.
- The Saskatchewan Petroleum Research Incentive.
- The International Test Centre for Carbon Dioxide Capture and the Canadian Clean Power Coalition.
- In its deliberations of funding, SIR considers projects that address a large number of priority sectors of the province. Support for research and innovation are two major considerations.
- Protein, Oilseeds and Starch Pilot Plant at the U of S.
- The Food Centre at the U of S.
- The Institute of Agricultural Rural and Environmental Health.
- The Saskatchewan Market Assessment of Research and Technology Program received funding of \$228,000 to support market research projects in fiscal year 2003/04 and 2004/05. This funding was made up of equal contributions from National Research Council of Canada – Industrial Regional Assistance Program and SIR.

The goals of the program are threefold:

- Enable SMEs to acquire market planning, research, or development assistance beyond their in-house capability.
- Expose SMEs to the skills available in the consulting community and help foster relationships between individual companies and consultants.
- Allow the local consulting community to display their capabilities to local SMEs.

F – 58 Invests in research in farming practices that help farmers better utilize land and energy resources (e.g., integration of livestock and field crop production to reduce reliance on synthetic fertilizers).

Government Response/Example(s):

- SAF provides \$12 million in agriculture research and development initiatives annually. IR contributes to infrastructure to support research and development.
- The Agriculture Applied Research Management (Agri-ARM) program receives funding from SAF and the Saskatchewan Forestry Centre.
- The Saskatchewan Forestry Centre.
- Under the APF, the environment chapter provides for EFPs. The Saskatchewan EFP program became operational early in 2005. By June 2005, the PCAB had delivered a total of 158 EFP workshops involving 1,242 producers for the workshop I sessions and 685 participants for workshop II. SAF employees provide technical support services to support EFP programming. The Saskatchewan Agri-Environmental Advisory Council, composed of leading edge producers, has been established to provide advice regarding implementation of EFPs.

S – 1 The government should work with private sector partners to develop increased meat processing in the province. These efforts would include assessing impediments that restrict meat plants from gaining an inspection status that would enhance market access opportunities (currently only federally inspected plants can ship out of the province).

Government Response/Example(s):

- As part of SAF's six point development strategy for the meat industry, a \$37.3 million dollar investment was announced in June 2005, with funding being allotted for a rebate program for companies investing in the building or expansion of slaughter and processing facilities to federal status, Food Centre and toll processing.
- SAF through the Food Centre is funding a pilot project to determine the feasibility of using distance based inspection technology as part of government oversight to provide equivalent food safety outcomes as on-site inspection methods in Saskatchewan regulated meat plants.
- Saskatchewan continues to support Federal/Provincial/Territorial initiatives for Canadian Food Inspection System reform that would allow the distribution of food products inter-provincially.
- SAF has provided \$80,000 funding to support the Saskatchewan Meat Processors Association (SMPA) develop training materials in collaboration with Saskatchewan Labour (Apprenticeship and Trade) and SIAST which would elevate meat cutting to the status of an indentured trade.
- SAF in collaboration with Saskatchewan Health will conduct consultations with the Saskatchewan meat processing industry, producer associations, and consumer groups regarding options for a provincial meat slaughter inspection program.

S – 2 With a finite amount of taxpayer dollars, the importance of a properly functioning, affordable and effective support structure is critical. Governments must more efficiently target and cap programs and payments and assist producers in transition to production systems that are much less reliant on government support. Farm support priorities must focus on helping producers adjust their operations and management skills so they can move effectively into long-term, sustainable sectors. Governments must be prepared to maintain strong social institutions, an effective regulatory system, labour legislation, and a just taxation system, to balance the increasing concentration of corporate power in today's global economy.

Government Response/Example(s):

- On December 22, 2003, Saskatchewan signed the APF Implementation Agreement, making available the two national safety net programs (the CAIS program and Production Insurance – otherwise known as Crop Insurance) for Saskatchewan producers. The CAIS program replaces the NISA program and the CFIP with one program that provides both income stabilization and income disaster protection.

The CAIS program is a whole-farm margin based program which seeks to provide support to producers that is commensurate with each farm's productivity and profitability history. The CAIS program is federally administered by the Farm Income Programs Directorate in Winnipeg. Crop Insurance is also an important risk management tool for Saskatchewan farmers. SCIC administers the Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Program. SCIC reviews the crop insurance programs annually in an effort to ensure the program provides effective and efficient production insurance products.

The CAIS program and Crop Insurance are both targeted assistance programs. Crop Insurance provides targeted support when individuals crop production levels are below insured historic levels. The CAIS program provides targeted support to individual farms when the eligible income less expense for the farm claim year declines below the individual farms previous average eligible income less expenses.

Federal and provincial governments consulted with industry to develop alternatives to producer deposit requirements under the CAIS program, as well as other program changes and modifications. The Farm Support Review Committee was consulted provincially and the National Safety Nets Advisory Committee was consulted federally, as were other industry organizations.

S – 3 Adequate short-term assistance is still required for stabilization and disaster programming during the transition period. In order to make the most effective use of this funding government must adjust current programs to better target need including improved disaster protection. The provincial Farm Support Review Committee and the National Safety Net Review process must be directed to find meaningful changes to the package of farm support programs [crop insurance, the Net Income Stabilization Account (NISA) program, and the Canadian Farm Income Program (CFIP)] including improving existing programs, the possible elimination of programs or portions of programs, and the introduction of new programs. It is essential that governments and the general public recognize that producers are not seeking income assurance but rather, adequate protection

against disasters.

Government Response/Example(s):

- See S – 2.

S – 4 Any government support programs, long or short-term, must be designed to be accessible to all producers, including First Nations farmers.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Although accessibility of First Nations producers to safety net programs technically exists, practical ability to access these programs still needs to be reviewed.

S – 5 A mandatory producer levy should be considered. The funds raised should not be commodity specific and a producer driven process be developed and implemented that identifies emerging sectors or market opportunities for existing and new crops for both food and non food uses, and results in public partnership of intellectual partnership.

Government Response/Example(s):

- A number of livestock and crop groups are currently participating in commodity specific check-off programs for both refundable and non-refundable levies. A number of other groups are exploring the possibilities of implementing similar producer levy programs for their sectors.
- Government will not proceed with a mandatory producer levy without general support of affected producers.

S – 6 The provincial government develops and implements a strategy that identifies high value crop opportunities, effective and competitive production technologies for new and existing crops and the appropriate skills and knowledge required for success.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SAF's Agriculture Manufacturing Strategy identifies sector specific strategies.

S – 7 The development of any environmental farm plans be developed in consultation with Saskatchewan producers and producer groups and that the programs reflect the conditions and environmental priorities of Saskatchewan.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Environmental farm planning constitutes the major component of the Environment Chapter of the Federal /Provincial APF.
- The Saskatchewan Agri-Environmental Advisory Council consisting of 15 leading producers has been created to provide advice on agri-environmental issues to the Canada Saskatchewan Implementation Management Committee and the Federal/Provincial Environmental Working Group under the Environment Chapter of APF. The PCAB has been contracted to deliver EFPs in Saskatchewan.
- The Saskatchewan EFP program became operational early in 2005. By June 2005, PCAB had delivered a total of 158 EFP workshops involving 1,242 producers for the workshop I sessions and 685 participants for workshop II.

S – 8 The provincial government pressure the federal government to develop and implement a strategy, including compensation, to mitigate the impact of trade distorting subsidies on the profitability of the grains and oilseeds sector and related industries.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan efforts to pursue trade injury compensation are vigorous and ongoing.

S – 9 That in cases of grain dealer/processor bankruptcy the Government of Saskatchewan recognizes the importance of producers receiving payment for product delivered and therefore urge the Canadian Grain Commissioner to pursue options that provide protection to producers.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The provincial government agrees producers should be fully compensated when a grain merchandiser licensed by the CGC defaults on cash purchase receipts, elevator receipts or grain receipts recognized under the *Canada Grain Act*.
- Saskatchewan also believes the CGC needs to be more vigilant in the policing of unlicensed operations that are engaged in the purchase and resale of grain.
- SAF continues to raise these issues with the CGC.

S – 10 The provincial government encourage the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) to continue to have a free and open discussion with producers and industry to facilitate the development of the tools and policies necessary for a profitable value added sector for both producers and industry.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The government believes that the CWB is doing a good job in promoting value-added activities. The promotion of activity must be on-going, with the agency continuing to seek out new ways to facilitate increased processing of grains in Saskatchewan.
- Specific activities include:
 - The issue is re-affirmed in meetings between officials of SAF and the CWB.
 - Meetings between the provincial Minister of Agriculture and Food and directors of the CWB occur at least annually. Action taken by the CWB to facilitate value-added activity is a regular agenda item.

S – 11 The provincial government acknowledge the concerns that some wheat customers have expressed in

relation to foods and food ingredients that are the result of modern biotechnology and that a market focus is critical to the success of farmers.

- This position is essentially identical to that of the province. The Minister of Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food has conveyed this position to Agriculture and Agri-food Canada.

S – 12 The provincial government not support the introduction of genetically modified (GM) wheat until market acceptance issues are addressed and technologies capable of identifying and segregating grains are in place.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan endorses this recommendation.

S – 13 The provincial government lead an effort that results in producer groups, industry and other provincial governments coming together in a common effort to impress upon the federal government their responsibility for any trade injury compensation.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan efforts to pursue trade injury compensation are vigorous and ongoing.

S – 14 The provincial government pressure the federal government to negotiate a World Trade Organization (WTO) agreement that requires penalties for parties involved in trade harassment policies and practices.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Government of Saskatchewan has repeatedly called upon the federal government to increase trade access to Saskatchewan producers.

- Saskatchewan continues to press the federal government to seek changes at the World Trade Organization level to the Agreement on Subsidies and Countervailing Measures that would clarify the existing rules and make them less prone to manipulation citing the inappropriate use of countervail and anti-dumping in agriculture as an example. Saskatchewan also continues to highlight the negative impact of these measures in discussions with the federal government on concerns arising from North American Free Trade Agreement.

S – 15 The Government of Saskatchewan use its influence with the federal government to ensure that the Canadian Grain Commission review panel report and recommendations are made in a timely fashion.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The reports on the internal and external reviews which were undertaken on the CGC were submitted to then Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada Lyle Vanclief during the 2002-03 fiscal year. Prior to this, SAFRR met with the Review Panel that was performing the external review.
- On July 2, 2002, Minister Serby wrote Minister Vanclief in respect to both the internal and external reviews that were underway at that time. In this correspondence Saskatchewan expressed concern with the process of the review and recommended to the Government of Canada that they proceed carefully with any changes to the scope and mandate of the CGC. The federal government was also encouraged to provide producers with ample information and time to provide their input to the review process.
- There has been no follow-up action by the federal government on these reports, nor have they been publicly released.

S – 16 One of the problems identified for the development of farm-based tourism is high insurance premiums. A useful move would be to pull the insurance industry together and give them an opportunity to respond, and failing satisfactory results, examine alternative ways of group insurance.

Government Response/Example(s):

- High insurance premiums have been identified as a barrier for small rural and northern tourism operators particularly those that are attempting to add value to their tourism product experience (e.g., horseback riding,

snowmobiling, water-based activities). The Saskatchewan Country Vacation Association has identified the need to address this issue from time to time, but to date have not brokered any special group insurance plan. The Saskatchewan Outfitters Association has developed an ongoing relationship with Reiben Insurance out of Creighton which specializes in serving the needs of their sector.

- At the national level, the CTC has also been addressing this issue recently. They completed a cross-country operator survey in 2002, which resulted in a database which profiles insurance providers for adventure and ecotourism operators which is posted on their website. Another useful reference tool available on the CTC website is the “Risk Management and Insurance Guide” (2001).
- This remains under active examination by the Business Development Subcommittee of ACRE.

S – 17 Specific opportunities in agri-tourism, eco-tourism and aboriginal tourism must be identified and qualified; involving potential private sector and public sector partners, and First and Metis Nations in both the process and any subsequent development are potential private sector and public sector partners, and First Nations and Metis.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Tourism Saskatchewan will continue to work with industry to identify the specific development resources required to further the rural tourism initiative.
- Vertical tourism development strategies were prepared for ecotourism (January 1996), agritourism (April 1998), and Aboriginal tourism (March 1996). Further to this, tourism development strategies for the Métis were also prepared covering three general regions (2000). Tourism Saskatchewan, with input from industry, plans to undertake reassessments of each of these vertical sectors with the objective of revising and refining the related strategies to ensure that they reflect current industry challenges and opportunities. Each of these sectors does provide opportunity for the growth of businesses in rural Saskatchewan.
- With the reassessment of these strategies within the broader opportunities linked to rural tourism and the development of tourism destination areas, Tourism Saskatchewan will continue to work with industry to identify the specific development resources required to further the rural tourism initiative. While accelerating the growth

of rural tourism is largely a function of program and private investment, Tourism Saskatchewan has identified this area as one of its' top-line opportunities and, as such, will direct substantial effort towards achieving growth in this area.

- Tourism Saskatchewan will also be prioritizing cultural tourism as a top-line opportunity as this area has considerable tourism potential as well. A different type of strategic priority setting will take place in this case as there is no base strategy to be used as a template.
- The current fiscal year will see action plans associated with these assessments discussed with stakeholders. Availability of resources required to implement the strategies and action plans will determine progress in each of the areas.

S – 18 Saskatchewan Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization develop and lead an Agri-business Investment Strategy. This strategy would identify an investment team that actively co-ordinates and pursues attracting entrepreneurs, agri-business, partners and capital into targeted sectors.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SIR and SAF have developed a shared agri-value manufacturing strategy and work continues across government to co-ordinate investment activities.

S – 19 Given that the opportunities in this province far outweigh the capacity of our internal capital resources, the attraction of outside investment will assist in stimulating growth and economic development within the agriculture sector. In an effort to put our industry on a more level playing field with neighboring provinces when it comes to attracting outside investment into the industry, the province should consider changes to the Farm Ownership Provisions under the Saskatchewan Farm Security Act.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The province has passed legislation that removes farm ownership restrictions on individuals and companies from other provinces. Formerly there were ownership restrictions of the acreage for those from outside the

province. This change was made to *The Saskatchewan Farm Security Act* to promote investment in Saskatchewan's rural areas.

S – 20 The provincial government should remove the residency requirements under the Farm Land Security Act for all individuals who are Canadian citizens.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The province has passed legislation that removes farm ownership residency restrictions on individuals and companies from other provinces.

S – 21 The provincial government should examine lifting the ownership restrictions under the Farm Land Security Act for specific development corridors or value-adding agricultural industries that are known to have significant local economic impact and are currently generally approved under existing *exemption provisions* (*horticulture, livestock, etc.*). The objective is to encourage outside investment in Saskatchewan into areas that will stimulate growth within the province.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The province has passed legislation that removes farm ownership residency restrictions on individuals and companies from other provinces. This change was made to *The Saskatchewan Farm Security Act* to promote investment in Saskatchewan's rural areas.
- There is allowance in legislation for case by case examination of projects that may not meet the provisions of *The Saskatchewan Farm Security Act*.

S – 22 That the Government of Saskatchewan form a Task Force to study the feasibility of establishing a foundation similar to Ontario's Trillium Foundation that would support rural community economic development initiatives.

Government Response/Example(s):

- This has been reviewed. Ontario's Trillium Foundation is driven by lottery revenues, but its focus is on community development and social and cultural issues.
- Saskatchewan addresses similar intents through the Department of Culture, Youth and Recreation work with non-government organizations at the community level. SIR was involved in community economic development through its services for provincial business and co-operative development through the Federal/Provincial Canada-Saskatchewan Business Service Centre and its 16 Regionalization sites. This function is now largely handled by Rural Development with the province's 28 REDAs to support business and community economic development through the development of "how to" business resources and training initiatives, and co-locations in regional One Stop Business Enterprise Centres to support and encourage business development in those regions.

S – 23 That the Government of Saskatchewan dedicate a pool of financial resources to create a venture capital fund that can be accessed by professional financial management firms to leverage private capital.

Government Response/Example(s):

- See I-1

S – 24 Saskatchewan must establish and maintain a complete, accurate and current ecological and geological information database (including water) and increase its availability to industry. This would assist Saskatchewan business to compete with other jurisdictions for limited exploration and development dollars.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Since 2001-02, additional funding has been provided to SIR for enhanced geological research and mapping to aid petroleum and mineral exploration in the province. The amount of Saskatchewan geoscience data that can be accessed electronically by industry continues to increase. SIR continues to implement improvements in

electronic service delivery.

- PFRA, working with other provincial departments, is developing a national data base on soil and water.
- Additional work needs to be done as resources become available.

S – 25 That the economic development and/or delivery opportunities presented by CommunityNet be taken into consideration in determining the most effective provision of health care services in rural and remote Saskatchewan.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Telehealth Saskatchewan currently allows patients and physicians in rural and remote areas to have consultations through an interactive video link with specialists in larger centres.

S – 26 That the economic development and/or delivery opportunities presented by Community Net be taken into consideration in determining the most effective provision of educational services in rural and remote Saskatchewan.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Through SCN, Saskatchewan is providing remote learning opportunities to rural citizens in several different ways, including:
 - Providing CommunityNet through a digital satellite network to the approximately 150 schools and communities not reached by SaskTel's CommunityNet service;
 - Providing approximately 2,500 hours per year of school credit programming through the e-learning television network. Fifty-six different classes are currently being taught through this medium. About 3,000 students are registered each year, the majority rural; and,
 - Providing remote learning opportunities through the SCN special events network on a fee-for-service basis.

S – 27 Develop a fully integrated, comprehensive, multi-discipline single source database of information available to municipalities, economic development organizations, businesses, professionals and others including detailed information on soil, water supply, transportation infrastructure, incentives, local government structure, land ownership and taxation.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The SaskBiz website offers some of this right now (<http://www.saskbiz.ca>), whereby community developers, investors and site selectors are able to review a variety of information needs of use to developers and business planning professionals. The site does not provide comparisons of local tax rates, soil types, land use restrictions, land ownership details or available incentives (financial resources would need to be made available to add these). The SaskBiz website can be supplemented by other directories, publications, and government sources of data/expertise when and as required. At a federal level, discussion on information data base is ongoing.
- The Business Permits and Licenses (BizPaL) website is being advanced to provide one-stop Internet access for required permits and licenses required by three levels of government for new developments in various sectors.

S – 28 That the provincial government approval processes for zoning, planning and development, water and sewage, and other approvals be reviewed and streamlined to be more efficient and to meet the needs of proponents. It is recognized that that this could ultimately require further resources.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Enhancements will be made to the planning legislation and regulations to add improved tools and mechanisms for the subdivision review process to meet emerging provincial and municipal needs, such as:
 - establishing statements of provincial interests that will provide a clearer framework for community planning throughout the province;
 - amending *The Subdivision Regulations* to provide for electronic application and electronic plan submissions and simplify technical requirements;

- amending *The Planning and Development Act, 1983* to remove provincial approvals for bylaws and reduce provincial requirements for planning approvals, where possible, that will reduce review time lines and expedite development; and,
- *The New Cities Act* has provisions for streamlined planning and approval processes. The new consolidated *Municipal Act* will have similar provisions.

S – 29 Better integration of agriculture, economics, and rural development programs and services should be pursued with municipalities, REDAs, Community Futures projects, and provincial departments to eliminate duplications, create efficiencies, linkages, and synergies and create one-stop shopping.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The agencies and organizations identified in the recommendation have been working with their respective regional partners to accomplish this objective. These organizations see merit in voluntarily collaborating on issues of mutual interest.
- The Agri-Business Development Branch of SAF is committed to working collaboratively with the other parties.
- SARM's "Clearing the Path" initiative.
- The Business Development Subcommittee of ACRE made recommendations concerning these issues, see P-1 and P-2.

S – 30 The first priority must be an effective primary health care strategy and system that is proactive, understood, and supported by funding. Only when this is in place can an effective governance model be developed with clear definitions and understandings of roles, authority, accountability and autonomy.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The government is promoting the development of primary health care teams, which build on existing RHA programs and services, emphasize a coordinated team approach to service delivery, and support stronger linkages among health care providers.

- A document entitled *Guidelines for the Development of a Regional Health Authority Plan for Primary Health Care Services* has been developed.
- See F-54 for additional primary healthcare development information.

S – 31 Health and Emergency Services: Factors that need to be considered:

- **Industry development;**
- **Business growth and expansion;**
- **Commuting population traffic volumes and transportation of dangerous goods;**
- **Location of closest primary and acute facilities, health centers, and ambulatory services; and,**
- **Changing demographics.**

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan Health feels that recruiting and retaining qualified professionals is an additional factor that needs to be considered in health and emergency services.
- Saskatchewan Health works closely with RHA and other partners in the health sector, to assess local needs in rural and northern Saskatchewan. These needs are then balanced with broader quality/volume issues to ensure that the most effective and sustainable types of services are provided.
- *The Action Plan on Saskatchewan Health Care* established a new joint planning relationship between RHAs and Saskatchewan Health, one that is linked to the overall government budget and planning processes. A key component of the new planning and accountability regime was the establishment of integrated planning forums including the Minister's Forum (Board Chairs and Minister) and the Leadership Council (Chief Executive Officers and Deputy Minister).
- Part of the planning cycle includes the preparation of a regional environmental scan. An environmental scan helps identify the key regional opportunities and challenges, and serves as a foundation for the RHA operational plan including identifying health and emergency services to be provided by RHAs. In the scan, RHAs are expected to consider the following broad categories:

- regional demographics and epidemiology;
- health status of residents;
- community/client/key stakeholder expectations;
- regional economic trends;
- human resources; and,
- service volumes.

S – 32 The Saskatchewan Government will stop the erosion of services and ensure that essential health and emergency services are available in rural communities to sustain and enable development. People need to know what health services they are assured of receiving within their rural communities.

Government Response/Example(s):

- In addition to primary health care development, the following are examples of Saskatchewan Health strategies to help ensure quality health care services for residents of rural Saskatchewan:
 - The Senior Citizens Ambulance Assistance Program and the Air Ambulance Program, limits the cost of road ambulance services within Saskatchewan to \$250 per trip for seniors 65 years of age and older. Air ambulance clients, with the exception of those living in northern Saskatchewan, pay a fixed amount of \$350 per trip. Rural and northern residents receive the most benefit from these programs because of the distances traveled.
 - Implementation of a three-year training initiative to bring emergency medical service providers up to emergency medical technician-basic level. This training initiative is targeted to emergency medical providers in rural and northern ambulance services.
 - Improved dispatch of ambulance services by having all calls for ambulance services in the province handled through wide-area dispatch centres.
 - Continuation of cancer outreach treatment programs, which enable rural residents to receive chemotherapy treatment and other supports in or close to their home community.
 - Expanded treatment and diagnostic services outside Regina and Saskatoon. For example, the expansion of renal dialysis services with further satellite sites being available for dialysis patients (renal satellites in operation in seven communities) and additional specialized medical imaging services outside Regina and Saskatoon. CT scanner services are currently available in the communities of Moose Jaw,

Yorkton, Swift Current, Prince Albert, and are also being implemented in North Battleford and Lloydminster during the 2005-06 fiscal year.

- Telehealth Saskatchewan currently allows patients and physicians in rural and remote areas to have consultations through an interactive video link with specialists in larger centres.
 - Work with regional health authorities to develop and implement regional population health promotion strategies, taking into consideration provincial priorities and local needs.
 - Continuation of efforts related to the Long Term Safe Drinking Water Strategic Plan.
 - Continued work towards the implementation of a Northern Health Strategy.
 - Encouragement of research related to the challenges of providing health services to rural and remote populations through the Health Research Strategy.
 - Implementation of province-wide health human resource planning.
- There are also some specific programs and initiatives targeted to recruiting and retaining physicians in both rural and urban settings. These include:
 - Emergency Room Coverage and Weekend Relief Program.
 - RPEG Program.
 - RPEG for foreign trained Physicians.
 - Medical Resident Bursary Program.
 - Undergraduate Medical Student Bursary Program.
 - Rural Practice Enhancement Training.
 - Rural Emergency Care/Continuing Medication Education Program.
 - Locum Service Program.
 - Rural Extended Leave Program

S – 33 That the Saskatchewan Government will provide funding to:

Match municipal contributions for emergency and fire protection equipment, telecommunications systems and Global Positioning Services (GPS); Ensure comprehensive 911 linkage to good, co-ordinated, dispatch services with GPS for fire protection and emergency response; and, Provide funding for adequate training for firemen, first responders, and other rescue personnel for rural communities.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Grants already exist for some of the equipment identified above. There are also programs to assist in the reduction of costs for fire department equipment, such as the municipal fire truck (education and health tax) exemption Regulations.
- The telecommunications equipment grant that provides some cost sharing support. This program has not been fully used by communities at this time.

a) Financial Assistance for comprehensive linkages of 911 with dispatch and GPC

- At the present time Sask 911 is specifically mandated to ensure that the 911 service is available in rural Saskatchewan. The provincial role in this service focuses on call taking and transfer to a police, fire or EMS dispatch agency.
- A 911 geographic information systems map has been developed by the province to assist the Public Safety Answering Points in locating callers and to log specific information relating to EMS and fire response areas. This service and role of the provincial government is on-going

b) Financial support for training

- Training for fire services is a local responsibility. The province does not provide financial assistance beyond the services in kind as described above under training.

S – 34 The provincial government develop a recognized program that provides people with the opportunity to build their entrepreneurial, leadership and management skills in the agri-value sector.

Government Response/Example(s):

- There are programs available in the business programs and faculties of SIAST, the universities and regional colleges.

- The Agri-Business Development branch of SAF is working with entrepreneurs.
- SAF provided funding to the SCCD to provide an opportunity for communities to participate in the Leadership Saskatchewan program.

S – 35 The Saskatchewan Government utilize existing resources to establish resources to establish a venture management initiative that would match experienced managers with new or expanding agri-business.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SIR is currently working with several partners in developing what will be a "Business Mentorship" initiative.
- This remains under active examination by the ACRE Business Development Subcommittee.
- SIR and RD continue to move forward and work with several partners in developing a "Business Mentorship" initiative.

S – 36 Enhance agriculture in school curriculum and acknowledge its importance to Saskatchewan and Canada.

Government Response/Example(s):

- A science credit at the Grade 11 level can be earned in Agriculture 20. As well, there are numerous courses that contain an agricultural perspective within the Practical and Applied Arts such as Agriculture Studies 30; Horticulture 10, 20, 30; Wildlife Management 10, 20, 30; Food Studies 10, 30; and, Forestry Studies 20, 30.
- Saskatchewan Learning has a partnership with Agriculture in the Classroom that has been very beneficial to Saskatchewan schools and is currently part of the group including Agriculture in the Classroom, Saskatchewan Labour, and others that developed and implemented the *Grow Up With Safety* school resources (health-education support). There is a strong farm safety component in this resource.

- The Green Certificate program provides hands-on training and experience in various lines of agriculture, including feedlot, cow/calf, dairy, sheep, crop, irrigated crop production, and aerial application. Approximately 90 people receive training through the program each year.
- On March 25, 2003, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the FSIN and SIAST. This partnership between the two organizations is going to mean new agricultural training for First Nations people. SIAST will be delivering the training where the people are, at the First Nation sites so people can stay in their home communities.

S – 37 The Province of Saskatchewan develop a labour strategy to meet the resource sector’s ongoing labour needs. This strategy needs to recruit youth and aboriginal people and provide them with the necessary skills so that they can live and work in rural Saskatchewan.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Education and Labour Market Planning and Information Strategy supports a system-wide approach to planning for the needs of Saskatchewan learners, employers and communities. It will help ensure that the post-secondary system is responsive to the changing knowledge and skill requirements of the Saskatchewan labour market.
- Through co-operating with First Nations and Métis partners as well as other sector partners, a Post-Secondary Sector Aboriginal Education and Training Action Plan was designed to improve access and success of Aboriginal people in post-secondary education, training and employment.
- The government is working on a strategy to address the needs of youth and Aboriginal people within the labour force.
- Canada Saskatchewan Career and Employment Services in 2003-04, provided an array of employment programs and supports to 24,000 persons to assist their transition to employment. These include resource centres, job posting information, liaising with employers and programs to improve the education and job readiness skills of potential employees.

- The Department of Labour works independently and with government and non-government stakeholders to help ensure that youth and resource sector employees and employers become more aware of their rights and responsibilities under *The Labour Standards Act* and *The Occupational Health and Safety Act*.
- This remains under active examination by the Employment Subcommittee of ACRE.

S – 38 The Government of Canada and the Government of Saskatchewan work together to implement a province-wide mentorship program. For example, a project manager would be assigned to a project in a community to work with the volunteers to initiate the planning process and provide direction and experience of navigating a project through the regulations of government and financial institutions.

Government Response/Example(s):

- See S – 35. SIR and RD continue to move forward and work with several partners in developing a "Business Mentorship" initiative.
- This remains under active examination by the Business Development Subcommittee of ACRE.

S – 39 Encourage professionals and tradespersons to live and work in rural Saskatchewan by:

- **Supporting and promoting the concept of local municipalities and professional/trade organizations financing the education of tradespersons and professionals, with a requirement for service in rural Saskatchewan; and,**
- **Recognizing the need for isolation and remoteness incentives to attract professionals to rural areas.**

Government Response/Example(s):

- To address the needs of local administration GR in partnership with Rural Municipal Administrators Association, Urban Municipal Administrators Association, SARM and SUMA established a Municipal Leadership Development Program that provides training to rural and urban administrators/clerks and elected officials. Administrators and clerks work in over 800 municipalities throughout the province.

- Further work needs to be done.
- This remains under active examination by the Employment Subcommittee of ACRE.

S – 40 Entrepreneurial training is needed for arts and culture. Research on opportunities and business models need to be made available.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Currently a number of mentoring and training programs exist or are being contemplated. The Cultural Industries Development Council represents organizations such as book publishers, sound recording, craft and visual artists and art galleries. Their focus is helping Saskatchewan artists market their work. A contact for the Council is the Saskatchewan Publishers Group at www.Saskpublishers.ca.
- Canadian Artists Representation – Front des Artistes Canadiens – a visual artist advocacy organization-- provides mentoring services and workshops for visual artists often related to setting up business and marketing work. Contact www.Carfac.sk.ca.
- The Saskatchewan Craft Council has developed a business planning program for members. Contact www.Saskcraftcouncil.org.
- SIR has done extensive work with Art and Craft Businesses to examine their marketing needs. In this regard we have worked collaboratively with Culture, Youth and Recreation and industry associations to determine needs.

S – 41 Performing and visual arts events, often located in larger urban centers, provide rural communities with opportunities for community-based entertainment, culture, and an enhanced quality of life. Public arts policy must assist rural areas to develop these opportunities at a local level.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Organization of Saskatchewan Arts Councils tours exhibitions and performing arts activity throughout Saskatchewan often over a 12 month period. Contact www.OSAC.sk.ca.
- Galleries such as the Mackenzie in Regina have an extensive exhibition/education program taken to rural communities each year. Contact www.Mackenzieartgallery.sk.ca.
- SaskCulture exists to help its member groups offer numerous cultural programming and training opportunities throughout the province. From community theatre to historic property renovation programs, SaskCulture's members have programs that serve the entire province and stretch across the total spectrum of cultural offerings, training and development assistance. Contact them at www.saskculture.sk.ca
- The Saskatchewan Arts Board plays a central role in making the arts accessible to Saskatchewan residents.
- Communities have also taken the initiative to make the arts available to Saskatchewan residents. Just one example of this is the Centre 48 initiative in South East Saskatchewan.

S – 42 That entrepreneurial training be developed and included in our K-12 school system.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Entrepreneurship 30 is included under the PAA renewal process. Entrepreneurship 30 is an elective course that may be used as one of the required PAA components. It is typically offered as an elective for Grade 12 students. Entrepreneurship 30 has a strong enrolment with an excess of 1200 students.
- The PAA curricula include a focus on ten Transition to Work Dimensions, one of which is entrepreneurship. These dimensions are expected to be addressed in the entire Practical and Applied Arts courses.

S – 43 Saskatchewan’s post-secondary educational institutions should give increased priority to practices that contribute to retaining young people in Saskatchewan, especially rural Saskatchewan by:

- **Being more aggressive in recruiting and retaining our high school graduates through scholarships and other incentives; and,**
- **Allocating seats in various professions and disciplines giving priority to students who will commit to future service in rural Saskatchewan.**

Government Response/Example(s):

Recruitment and Retention:

- The Saskatchewan Post-Secondary Graduate Tax Credit is a one-time tax credit that graduates and journeypersons may apply against their Saskatchewan Income Tax. For 2005 the graduate tax credit will increase from \$500 to \$675 for students who graduate from eligible post-secondary institutions between January 1 and December 31, 2005. The tax credit will continue to increase each year to \$1,000 by 2007.
- Centennial Merit Scholarship targets top students from Saskatchewan high schools and enhances the ability of institutions to attract and retain high-calibre students. The funding is paid to institutions responsible for its administration. Total funding amount has been increased in 2005-06 from \$500,000 to \$1,000,000.
- Other scholarships funded through the Student Aid Fund that are available to Saskatchewan Students are:
 - the Queen Elizabeth II Scholarship in Parliamentary Studies (\$20,000 for university level study of Saskatchewan politics and government);
 - the Queen Elizabeth II Centennial Aboriginal Scholarship (\$20,000 scholarship to First Nations or Métis graduates pursuing graduate studies in Saskatchewan);
 - the D.R. Simmons Memorial Scholarship (\$500 to graduating Grade 12 students of First Nations or Métis ancestry continuing studies at the post-secondary level);
 - the James Dickson Scholarship (\$500 to graduating Grade 12 students of black ancestry continuing studies at the post-secondary level); and
 - the Doreen Kronick Matching Scholarship (up to \$1,000 to full or part-time Saskatchewan graduate students studying in Saskatchewan in a field that addresses the needs of the learning disabled.

Service Commitments in Rural Saskatchewan:

- The NEPS represents a partnership between the University of Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology and the FNUC. The Northern NEPS program was implemented in the 2002-03 academic year with a seat capacity of 40. The program which is delivered in Prince Albert (FNUC) gives priority to northern residents who are of Aboriginal ancestry.
- The Northern Health Science Access Program in Prince Albert provides supports to academically prepare Aboriginal and northern students for careers in the health professions with an emphasis on nursing. This program is a partnership between the provincial government and three educational post-secondary institutions – FNUC, SIAST, and U of S; the Northern Intertribal Health Authority and the Métis Employment Training of Saskatchewan. There were 19 graduates in 2002-03, 28 graduates in 2003-04, and 24 graduates in 2004-05. Forty-five students have been accepted into the program for the 2005-06 academic year.
- The Native Access Program to Nursing provides supports to Aboriginal Nursing students enrolled in the NEPS.
- In addition, there are several initiatives and programs targeted to attracting and keeping physicians in rural Saskatchewan. These include:
 - Rural Practice Establishment Grants.
 - Rural Practice Enhancement Training.
- Saskatchewan Health also offers bursaries for students that are prepared to sign “return for service” contracts in a number of disciplines. Some of the bursaries are more quickly forgiven if they work in rural areas than in urban ones.

S – 44 The people of Saskatchewan will:

- **Develop a vision of public education that promotes a broad liberal education at the secondary level; and,**
- **Ensure post-secondary institutions have a vision of specialized education.**

Government Response/Example(s):

K-12:

- The Goals of Education for Saskatchewan schools provide direction for a broad, comprehensive education that outlines the foundation knowledge, skills, attitudes and abilities for a successful life.
- Opportunities to develop the *Common Essential Learnings* are central in the K-12 education system. If students can communicate well, are numerate, are critical and creative thinkers, have positive social values and skills, are technologically literate, and are independent learners by the time they finish high school, they will be well-equipped to become productive, contributing members of society.
- Partnerships, such as the School^{PLUS} and Early Childhood Development initiatives, within the Saskatchewan community strengthen the system to ensure that all Saskatchewan children and youth benefit from the breadth of the Saskatchewan curriculum.

Post-Secondary Education:

- Post-secondary education institutions in Saskatchewan have a well-developed vision of the importance of both general and specialized education, as evidenced by the current array of programs and services offered.

S – 45 The people of Saskatchewan will:

Adopt the philosophical structure of community schools in rural education systems as outlined by Saskatchewan Learning. As a hub for a network of community organizations, community schools can foster the development and well being of the entire community. Increased utilization of schools at the community level is needed.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The number of community schools has extended from urban elementary and northern schools to secondary and rural schools and have more than doubled since 2000 from 41 to 98.
- On February 21, 2002, the Government of Saskatchewan endorsed the vision of School^{PLUS}, a concept that sees schools as enhancing student outcomes through the delivery of a strong learning program and being the

centre of services and supports for the children and families they serve. Its goal is to create the conditions where every school is relevant to children and youth, responsive to family and community and results oriented. School^{PLUS} requires the concerted and sustained efforts of school personnel, families, communities and human service providers working together.

S – 46 Post-secondary institutions will change post-secondary requirements (real and assumed) to reflect the vision of public education (e.g. calculus, seven sciences). There is currently not adequate time to take a range of classes in the secondary system if post-secondary education entrance requirements and expectations are met.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The department includes post-secondary representatives on provincial curriculum reference committees. In this way, post-secondary representatives have input into curriculum content (e.g., Grade 12 English language arts curriculum) and become knowledgeable about the direction of new curricula. In some cases, this has caused post-secondary institutions to change the content of their course offerings (e.g., introductory English language arts courses at university).
- As the department develops Grade 12 curricula, our provincial Saskatchewan Learning registrar forwards course descriptions of new curricula to post-secondary institutions so that they can determine the courses that are acceptable to meet university entrance requirements for particular post-secondary programs.
- Meetings are held between department staff and post-secondary faculty (university deans and SIAST deans) to discuss new Grade 12 courses and potential use for entrance requirements or post-secondary credit.
- Meetings are held among department staff, SIAST and the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission to determine Secondary Level Practical and Applied Arts courses that will be accepted to challenge the Level 1 Apprenticeship exam (e.g., Welding 10, 20, and 30).

III Infrastructure

S – 48 Processing of horticultural crops could be encouraged to enhance the viability of irrigation production.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The SAF manufacturing strategy includes horticulture and vegetables as a strategic area.

S – 49 The province change its policy on how it charges for permits that allow users to run primary weights on secondary weight highways. The fees for TPP should be changed so that businesses wishing to run trucks at primary weights over secondary weight highways are charged a fee, which reflects the costs of the incremental damage caused to the secondary weight highways by using primary weights. The fee would apply for every km that a truck runs on a secondary weight highway at primary weights. The shipper would no longer be required to share the benefits with DHT associated with fewer trips. The fees should be administered fairly and equitably across all industries and all road users.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT does not intend to change the policy as it applies to heavy hauls where vehicles are carrying loads above primary weights. However, the policy for primary weights being carried on secondary weight roads has been revised, to support the movement of certain agricultural products. The revisions to the TPP allow producers and shippers to save on trucking costs by hauling primary weights on secondary weight highways. In return for the ability to access increased weights, shippers pay incremental road damage costs caused by primary weight hauls on secondary highways, a share of productivity savings on the secondary weight portion of the trip and an annual \$200 administrative fee. Productivity savings were previously assessed on the entire trip, from origin to destination. The revisions apply to the movement of livestock to intermediary or processing facilities, potatoes, feed grains, oilseeds, pulse crops, and agricultural products moved by container or trailer on flat car trailers.

- Application of this revised policy to all commodities would result in inordinate road damage to our secondary weight highways leading to an unsustainable road system and a reduced level of service.
- The department is also in the process of reviewing the winter weight policy (duration and application to eight axle trucks).
- SARM's Clearing the Path initiative will further examine transportation impediments at the local level and the government will consider recommendations that may flow from the process.

S – 50 The province amend legislation which would allow municipalities the ability to assess special fees on industries which create extra road costs above and beyond the normal road traffic loads. The extra fees should be administered fairly and equitably across all industries and all road users.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Rural municipalities currently have the ability to enter into road haul maintenance agreements. GR is working with municipal stakeholders to consolidate *The Urban and Rural Municipal Acts*. The new consolidated *Act* will allow urban municipalities to enter into road maintenance agreements, similar to rural municipalities.
- GR will be undertaking a review of the road haul maintenance fee structure to determine if any adjustments are needed. Affected municipal and industry stakeholders will be consulted.
- GR, SAF and other departments are assisting SARM in its review of rural economic impediments under its “Clearing the Path” initiative. SARM is reviewing road haul agreements.

S – 51 The province, in consultation with stakeholders, establish an integrated transportation corridor system. The corridor system should be developed using various information available such as grain, tourist, and trucking routes and using the Rural Road Classification System. The main corridors, road linkages, and feeder roads should all be identified. It should also be recognized that constriction and maintenance funding should be allocated proportionately.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT agrees in principle with the concept of developing an integrated transportation corridor system and has a process in place to identify the corridors. Grain corridors have been identified in conjunction with the PGRP. The corridors that were identified were reviewed with the ATPCs to ensure the appropriate roads were targeted as grain corridors.
- SARM, under the “Clearing the Path” initiative, has established a committee to examine this issue.
- ACRE Infrastructure Subcommittee is also examining this issue.
- As the corridor system is identified and evolves, the process in place will ensure that adequate consultations with stakeholders occur. The process will include pertinent stakeholder groups including the ATPCs and use of the transportation plans that have been developed by the ATPCs.

S – 52 The province develop transportation infrastructure investment strategies that maximize rates of return to the economy. The investment strategies also must recognize the role of rural areas in generating GDP. The investment strategies must be developed for both the long-term and the short-term.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT currently uses the Asset Management System to determine preservation investment strategies. Condition ratings on the transportation system are done on an annual basis and fed into the Asset Management System. The system then calculates the optimum preservation program for the available funding.
- Funding for capital investments such as twinning, forestry expansion, rural roads etc. becomes dependent on the level of investment required to provide and operate a safe transportation system and the level of investment required to preserve the existing system. Capital projects are very expensive running as high as \$500,000 per kilometer. It is, therefore, important that capital is strategically invested to meet the most important needs of society and the economy.

S – 53 Policies, practices and procedures be developed that require provincial government departments to work together in a more integrated, collaborative and complementary manner to ensure integrated development of the transportation system. When appropriate, this must be done inter-jurisdictionally to ensure the integrated development of the transportation system.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT concurs with the goal of this recommendation and will continue to work towards an integrated system by focusing on many fronts.
- On a local basis, the department regularly consults with a number of other departments and works with SARM and SUMA and the ATPC's to promote the transportation system so it can best support the economic and social needs of the province.

S – 54 The Department of Highways and Transportation develop a policy to accommodate changing weight requirements and road capabilities. Authority to approve weight designation changes should rest with the Minister of Highways and Transportation.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Significant changes to weight restrictions above current levels are a major public policy issue with many financial ramifications to the province. As with any major public policy issue, Cabinet approval is required when significant changes are proposed. DHT is currently consulting with stakeholders regarding current weight designations for the principal and regional transportation systems. DHT has consulted with stakeholders regarding expansion of the primary weight network.
- Section 35 subsections (1) and (2) of *The Highways and Transportation Act, 1997*, authorize the Minister of DHT to approve weight designation changes as suggested above.

- As a result of a review by GR of municipal road issues in the heavy oil producing area of Saskatchewan, in 2003 amendments were made to *The Rural Municipality Act, 1989* to provide authority for all rural municipalities to designate primary weights and truck routes for municipal roads. The new authorities provide for harmonization among rural municipalities and with provincial standards, as well as a dispute resolution process when a municipality or municipalities and road users cannot agree to the method or harmonizing weight limits or designated truck routes. The dispute resolution will help to ensure continuity of transportation routes across jurisdictions.
- GR is working with municipal stakeholders to consolidate *The Rural and Urban Municipality Acts*. The consolidated *Act* will propose that both rural and rural municipalities continue to have authority to designate primary weights and transportation routes and a dispute resolution process. It will also propose that urban municipalities be allowed to enter into road maintenance agreements, similar to rural municipalities.
- GR has jurisdiction over municipal roads and is currently in the process of amending municipal legislation regarding weights designations. The amendments will allow municipalities to the ability to designate their roads as primary weight roads if they so choose.

S – 55 The province provide adequate resources to assess the load bearing capacities, width capacities and conditions of all municipal and provincial bridges.

Government Response/Example(s):

- With the trend to larger trucks it is important to assess the capacity capabilities of the bridges in the province. DHT has increased staffing levels to better expedite bridge inspections so that bridge capacity and condition deficiencies can be addressed in an integrated strategic manner.

S – 56 All levels of government and industry establish a process for providing information to the road authorities on impending and future economic development projects.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT agrees that it is important to be included at a very early stage in impending and future economic development projects. The department established the ATPCs in order to work toward improving communications between road authorities and economic development initiatives around the province. DHT will continue to provide resources in support of the ATPC initiative.

S – 57 The Department of Highways and Transportation should significantly increase the use of their authority to audit weigh bill tickets. Depending on the circumstance, an overweight charge should be laid on the basis of an audit or the audit could be used in conjunction with other enforcement measures.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Since 2002, a new audit program was developed and implemented. The program involves shifting some existing human resources through the winter months to complete weight audits.
- DHT also conducted educational seminars with the ATPCs and industry. The purpose of the seminars is to educate the public regarding the legislative changes and the auditing.
- DHT will be implementing new technology involving weigh in motion and camera technology at three locations in September 2005. This system will provide information on non weight compliant carriers.

S – 58 Regulations and policies need to be put in place to ensure efficient and adequate random auditing can be done. To ensure fairness and equity, all industries and those involved in moving goods by truck would be subject to random weight audits.

Government Response/Example(s):

- In 2002, a new audit program was developed and implemented. The program includes the use of intelligence from present department databases and staff to determine which companies will be audited. The program includes three different approaches: 1) Worst offenders based on tickets issued. 2) Industry focus. 3) Random.

Current legislation under Section 63 of *The Highways and Transportation Act, 1997* provides the department with the authority to carry out this program.

- DHT has conducted educational seminars with the ATPCs and industry. The purpose of the seminars is to educate the public regarding the legislative changes and the auditing.
- The program will be further enhanced with the installation of new technology involving weight in motion and camera technology in September 2005. The system will provide information on non weight compliant carriers to the investigative unit.

S – 59 The Department of Highways and Transportation and Area Transportation Planning Committees educate the public regarding our highway system, its construction and what it is capable of handling for weights. This should include things like damage costs caused by overweight vehicles and by the speed of vehicles.

Government Response/Example(s):

- An information and training package will be developed in conjunction with the expansion of the primary weight system and the required evaluations and selection criteria.

S – 60 There be no further increase in the primary weights, regardless of what other provinces do, until the primary weight transportation system in the province is at a long-term standard capable of handling increased weights. An exception to this would be where 100 percent federal funding is made available to address national/international harmonization issues.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT is always under pressure to increase weight restrictions on the roads. Increases in allowable weights are an important element in improving overall productivity in the economy. Increases in allowable weights can reduce the cost of moving goods to market resulting in a more competitive position for Saskatchewan businesses in the global market place.

- DHT is developing a new primary weight policy to better manage the conflicting demands of higher weight and sustainable infrastructure. The new policy will be more rational, transparent, and defensible.

S – 61 The province change the existing legislation to permit rural municipalities to designate routes for weights, dangerous goods and dimension (over-sized) loads.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT is working with GR to amend current legislation so as to allow municipalities to designate haul routes up to primary weights.
- The authority for rural municipalities to establish, through a bylaw, a vehicle weight management system was incorporated into *The Rural Municipality Act, 1989* section 188.1 in 2003. The amendment enables municipalities to designate routes that any vehicle or class of vehicles is required to use. This would allow municipalities to designate routes for weights, dangerous goods, and over-dimension loads.

S – 62 The province commit to work collaboratively and co-operatively with appropriate stakeholders to plan, develop and implement a sustainable integrated rural air access strategy.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT recognizes the importance of air access to rural Saskatchewan. Through ongoing dialogue with the Saskatchewan Aviation Council, programs have been developed to assist with airport operating costs. There has been some interest expressed for a capital assistance program and discussions will continue on that front.

S – 63 That the Government of Saskatchewan continue to treat all future short lines as commercial ventures.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Short line railways are currently treated as commercial ventures. There are no plans to change this policy.

S – 64 The federal government fund the construction and maintenance of the national highway system in Canada.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT agrees that there is a need for more federal funding and in particular ongoing funding for a national highway system. There has been some success in procuring federal funding on a somewhat ad hoc basis. Examples include the Canada Ag-Infrastructure Program, PGRP, the Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund, the Border Infrastructure Fund, and the Strategic Highways Infrastructure Program.

S – 65 It is recommended that any permits, fines for overweight vehicles or other charges, directly related to road costs, collected by the Department of Highways and Transportation should remain with the Department of Highways and Transportation rather than being allocated to the General Revenue Fund for the Province.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The current fiscal policy of the government is that all revenues accruing to the government accrue in the consolidated GRF. Any changes in this policy are at the discretion of Cabinet.

S – 66 The province conduct an independent review of existing Department of Highways and Transportation contracts used for construction, maintenance and engineering contracting to the private sector to ensure the department is receiving value for money.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT recently underwent a value for money audit of the tendering process with no major concerns being identified regarding the overall process. All DHT expenditures are subject to provincial audits on an annual basis.
- When contractors are hired through the tendering process the contractors are required to post a performance bond. Any performance problems result in the forfeiture of some or all of the performance bond and also result in the contractors returning to rectify any problems that do occur.
- Review of other agency processes was completed.
- Specifications are reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis.
- A review of the consultant selection process is underway with an emphasis on Quality Based Selection.

S – 67 The province direct the Crown utilities to work with road authorities to achieve an efficient transportation and utility distribution system that is cost effective and workable for all parties. Prior to construction/reconstruction of linear utilities the consultation process must also include adjacent landowners.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT agrees in principle with all parties working together to resolve any differences regarding the Crown utilities use of rights-of-way. DHT will continue to work with the Crowns to achieve the best solutions possible for all stakeholders.
- DHT has agreements with SaskTel and SaskPower that details the conditions for allowing utilities in right of ways and have legislated authority for permit processes to deal with utility companies.

S – 68 A special trailer could be designed that would allow a heavier container to be transported on Saskatchewan’s secondary weight roads, therefore, the province and industry should work together to develop a trucking method and axle system to accommodate the use of containers to their maximum capacity.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT works closely with industry on an ongoing basis to develop technologies that are capable of providing a better distribution of weights over the roads in a safe, economic and efficient manner. Generally, bridge infrastructure has been the limiting factor to implementation of heavier container vehicles on secondary routes.

S – 69 The province, industry and educational institutions promote the opportunities, careers and training that are available in the transportation sector.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT recognizes the challenges of promoting the transportation sector regarding the opportunities, careers and training that are available within the industry. DHT is one of the largest employers of students in the province. This enables students to gain first hand knowledge of and experience in the large variety of career opportunities available in the transportation sector.

S – 70 The trucking industry continue with an increase in their presence at high schools and public forums in promoting the interest and respect of the trucking industry and the job opportunities.

Government Response/Example(s):

- See S – 69.

S – 71 The province update the digital map on the location of airports, airstrips and their classifications in Saskatchewan.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT worked in partnership with the SAC to produce a new air facilities map that among other things show or identify the location of airports and airstrips in Saskatchewan. The map may be obtained by contacting the SAC Administrator at 306-931-6118.

S – 72 The province continue the Short line Advisory Unity in the Department of Highways and Transportation and continue to develop, in consultation with existing short lines and local stakeholders, regulations under the Saskatchewan Railway Act.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT plans on continuing to support the Rail Services Unit and their activities.

S – 73 The DHT, the Area Transportation Planning Committees (ATPCs) and the Saskatchewan Trucking Association (STA) work together to promote truck safety and to increase the public's awareness and perception of large trucks.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SGI has developed several media spots relating to large trucks on the road. The ads highlight stopping distances and blind spots.

S – 74 The province, in conjunction with the municipalities, conduct a detailed review to determine the potential current and future uses for railway rights-of-way and develop a plan to preserve them where necessary. The province should also develop legislation to fairly deal with the removal of a rail line.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SARM has formed a committee under their “Clearing the Path” initiative to examine transportation issues which could include future uses for railway right-of-ways.
- The government is working with the two national railways to develop guidelines for the management of abandoned railway right-of-ways.

S – 75 That the Government of Saskatchewan provide funding to the Saskatchewan Transportation Company (STC) to provide basic public passenger and freight transportation services to rural Saskatchewan where use warrants.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Since inception in 1998, STC has been receiving funding from CIC. STC provides service to 275 communities in the province, and, through interline partnerships with other bus companies, reaches almost 400 Saskatchewan communities, as well as all of North America. In 2003, STC received an operating grant of \$1.6 million from CIC and carried 258,841 passengers and 1,275,000 parcels for its customers.

S – 76 In an effort to be more proactive, all jurisdictions responsible for roads and transportation must do a better job of educating the public on the load capacity of roads and highways, the importance or weight compliance and safety issues.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Part of DHT's overall strategy is to consult with and educate stakeholders. An information package is currently being developed regarding highway designs and the impacts of weights and speeds on the roads. The information package will be used to educate the ATPCs and other stakeholders. The ATPCs will in turn be able to educate their members on issues regarding designs, weights and speeds.
- Publications such as the Saskatchewan Truckers' Guide also provide information concerning transport regulations including weight and safety.

S – 77 Highway signage is very important to rural communities and businesses. Directional signage for communities must be effective and up-to-date. Provision of signage within the highway right-of-way for specific businesses and community services should be available on a cost-recovery or cost-shared basis.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT recognizes that signage is an important element in rural economic development. Further work needs to be done to accentuate communities, including First Nation communities, and the services provided within these communities. The department has commissioned an engineering consultant firm to dialogue with stakeholders and to evaluate potential options for improvements to existing sign polices.
- Further work also needs to be done to educate communities, including First Nation communities, about the existing signing opportunities already available to them to promote their communities and their services. The department plans to investigate ways of doing this as a subsequent project once the outcomes of the above consultant study are known.

S – 78 The Department of Highways must have a three-year capital works program to be more timely and cost-effective and to allow multi-year funding commitments.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT has secured multi-year funding over the past several years through its negotiations with the federal government. In addition, the province has made multi-year funding commitments for transportation infrastructure investment. This allows the province to announce multi-year capital construction project plans. DHT also publishes a performance plan that identifies key actions to be accomplished each year and a set of measures that show progress towards long term goals and objectives. Annual performance plans and multi-year funding commitments provide the public, road building and other industries with timely information about transportation improvements to assist them in their planning and business operations.

S – 79 Given the continuation of declining enrollments and school closures, policies and programs for renovations of facilities must be given at least the same priority as construction of new facilities.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Over the past number of years, the Department of Learning (and formerly the Department of Education) spent the vast majority of its available K-12 capital budget in the area of replacement of building systems, modernization, and restoration activities with some additions to existing facilities. Some new schools have been announced and built in recent years, and a good proportion of them were for replacement of schools that had outlived their economic and functional lives (i.e., it was more cost effective and functionally appropriate to build new than to renovate). The new schools built over the past several years and not in this category were for areas of the province where enrolment growth occurred. Given that there were 778 K-12 facilities in the province as of September 2002, the number of “new” buildings, as a proportion of that number, has been very small.
- In order to place even further emphasis on maintaining existing facilities, the Department approved-in-principle a new Restoration Program in 2002.
- The Restoration Program was created through consultation with stakeholders (Saskatchewan School Trustees Association and the Council Educational Facility Planners, International). The proposal met with virtually unanimous endorsement from all school divisions across the province. A capital reference committee is being established to further review and refine the program.

S – 80 That the Government of Saskatchewan develop an Internet based central cataloguing system of available SaskHousing units for rent or purchase in rural Saskatchewan.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Saskatchewan Housing Corporation views the recommendation on the development of an internet based central cataloguing system as a positive initiative, and will investigate a staged development of a site.
- The use of the Internet as a marketing tool would provide wider exposure to the supply of units available for rent or sale. An internet site would have to be continually updated and maintained. In order to be effective, the information for the site should be linked to a property management system capable of accommodating this feature. The current system can not easily accommodate this requirement.
- A new housing information system is currently being implemented. This system has the potential to accommodate a link with an internet site; however this will require some additional systems development costs.
- As part of HomesFirst initiative, Saskatchewan Housing Corporation is ensuring that it makes the best possible use of its limited resources. A number of unique opportunities will come to individuals and communities throughout Saskatchewan, as Saskatchewan Housing Corporation will make available surplus units from its assisted-rental portfolio. Many of the selected units will be made available for sale on the private market, thereby allowing the broader community unfettered access to these units while turning yesterday's chronic vacancies into tomorrow's opportunities for homeownership. This will strengthen local housing markets and stabilize communities. It will bring new investment into certain communities and help to satisfy the demand for affordable homeownership units and private market rentals. This will occur through phases. Throughout the first phase, Saskatchewan Housing Corporation will find better uses for surplus assets in as many as 60 communities throughout the province.
- SaskBiz was developed so that other agencies could access the data layers (and add others) using the system with their own uniform resource locators and different facades.

S – 81 A program should be established to assist small communities with the energy costs of operating cultural and recreational facilities and to encourage energy efficiency in operating local facilities.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SaskPower, through demonstration project(s), is investigating the options for financing and implementing energy efficiency projects in community facilities.
- In 2004, Watrous, Saskatchewan, proceeded as the only community participating in the pilot for the CEMS feasibility phase. In this project, SaskPower, along with the Saskatchewan Research Council, assisted the town with an energy audit, recommended energy conservation measures and is continuing to provide logistical support for the installation of energy efficient lighting, motors and system controls in town facilities.
- Implementation of the measures, which will be managed by the Town of Watrous, is expected in 2005.
- SaskPower will study the results of the Watrous project to determine whether it is necessary to conduct additional demonstration projects and whether it is feasible to establish a broader CEMS program.
- SaskPower currently offers energy performance contracting to commercial and institutional customers with total energy costs greater than \$250,000. Customer satisfaction research with small to medium customers and shareholder expectations, demonstrates interest in a similar service that meets the unique needs of institutional and commercial customers with total energy costs of less than \$250,000 per year. The concept of a Community Facilities Energy Management Service was further developed as a measure within the Saskatchewan GreenPrint.
- Working with the Mechanical Contractors Association of Saskatchewan, SaskEnergy formed the Commercial Network of natural gas commercial contractors in June 2005, to provide expanded services to commercial customers. The Commercial Network is a voluntary alliance of mechanical contractors that install and service natural gas equipment for commercial customers. Together we are offering financing and leasing services, providing education on energy efficiency, and accessing the Government of Canada Commercial Buildings Energy Efficiency programs to help commercial customers save money through energy efficiency.

S – 82 Endorsement of SaskPower’s Green Power Program and the pursuit of wind-power, co-generation and other electricity generational alternatives, many of which appear to be feasible in rural Saskatchewan.

Government Response/Example(s):

- As of September 2004, SaskPower has selected three project proposals for the first year of its Environmentally Preferred Power program. The program creates the opportunity for SaskPower to partner with independent power producers to build and operate small-scale generation projects, with up to five megawatts capacity, in order to meet Saskatchewan's projected energy needs until 2010 with no new greenhouse gas emissions. Subsequent request for proposals will be issued in 2004 and 2005, for a total solicitation of 45 megawatts. The first in-service date for any project would be 2005. Eligible technologies would include solution flare gas, wind, run-of-the-river hydro, biomass, biogas, heat recovery from existing waste heat source, landfill gas and photovoltaic.
- Saskatchewan is in the process of developing a strategy to foster development of a “Green and Prosperous Economy”.

S – 83 Government needs to play a strong advisory, advocacy, co-ordination and regulatory role to ensure the protection of vital water resources for present and future generations.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Government of Saskatchewan has developed and is implementing a Safe Drinking Water Strategy.
- The Saskatchewan Watershed Authority was created to protect Saskatchewan’s watersheds, through allocation of water rights and studies of surface and ground water supplies, ensures water use does not exceed the sustainable supply.
- The Saskatchewan Watershed Authority is leading development of a Water Conservation Plan. The plan will be completed in 2006.
- Agrivision released their “50 year plan for water” at a conference in November 2004. Government will carefully

study the recommendations coming out of the conference and contained within the plan.

S – 84 Education on water quality management and monitoring is needed for rural residents and municipal technicians.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Under the Safe Drinking Water Strategy, the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority was designated to lead an interdepartmental and interagency plan for public education on all aspects of watershed management and drinking water issues.
- The Authority supports a number of educational programs, primarily directed to school-aged children. The most significant of these is Project Water Education for Teachers.
- The Authority delivers a number of stewardship programs that work with land owners to protect watersheds.
- A toll-free inquiry line (1-866-SASK-H2O) has been established. This service provides citizens with one contact number for their water related questions.
- SaskWater provides water and waste water training to local communities on a fee-for-service basis. Through a contract with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, SaskWater provides technical assistance and operator training to a number of First Nations and northern communities.

S – 85 The role and support of the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration (PFRA) in farm rural water development, which has diminished in recent years, should be restored to previous levels.

Government Response/Example(s):

- PFRA is a federal agency. However, Saskatchewan's basic annual allocation under PFRA's Rural Water Development Program has been stable at \$2.2 million for the past five years. This program was enhanced

over the 2001-02 and 2002-03 period through the Canada-Saskatchewan Livestock Farm Water Program with an additional \$2.5 million in federal contributions and \$1.5 million in provincial contributions. One half million dollars of the federal contribution was allocated to strategic research projects; the balance of the federal funding and all of the provincial funding was allocated to on-farm projects.

- Saskatchewan participates in the National Water Supply Enhancement Program, a four year \$60 million initiative to improve communities and producer's capacity to deal with drought situations through expanded rural water supply

S – 86 A local approach and cooperation between municipalities should be encouraged for firefighting services. Incentives should promote co-operation between municipalities.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The OFC has encouraged and supported co-operation among municipalities for fire fighting services since 1994. This is a trend across North America as jurisdictions identify the benefits of area-wide services.
- The services offered by the OFC are ongoing, however there are no recommendations to provide financial incentives. The OFC continues to update and modify models and advisory systems to assist municipalities develop are-wide services to address technology.
- The resource needs for municipalities vary widely to undertake a risk and needs assessment for area wide services. SUMA has a subcommittee on emergency services, which has shown some interest in this issue, and a presentation was made at the SUMA conference in February 2003. There has been no further follow-up requested from SUMA. The presentation was offered to SARM for their 2002 conference, but there was no response back on the offer.

S – 87 There is a need to create awareness of what citizens can do to supplement police services through programs such as: Rural Crime Watch, Crime Stoppers, and Citizens on Patrol.

Government Response/Example(s):

- **Rural Crime Watch:** Community based and pro-active. Addressed through SARM. Programs within province are uneven, ranging from active to almost non-existent. Rural Crime Watch operates on a volunteer basis and is financed through fundraising activities. A Regina Neighbourhood Crime Watch Program with a similar structure and organization is also active.
- **Citizens On Patrol Program:** Community based and pro-active. Addressed through SUMA. Created from the Rural Crime Watch concept to address municipal crime concerns. Citizens On Patrol is becoming stronger throughout the province as community members become more aware of how they can take responsibility for addressing crime within their community. Citizens work and communicate directly with local police. About 25 communities are active. Citizens On Patrol works on a volunteer basis and is financed through fundraising activities, supplemented in one instance by Saskatchewan Justice funding (\$5K annually for the Yorkton Citizens On Patrol Program).
- **Crime Stoppers:** Crime Stoppers combines media, police and the public in a co-operative crime-solving effort. It combats two major obstacles to the reporting of crime, apathy and fear, by offering cash awards and anonymity. The program is delivered by autonomous associations that are managed by civilian boards of directors and supported by fundraising activities and donations from individuals, corporations, service groups and community organizations. Such funds are augmented by a \$10K annual Saskatchewan Justice grant to support the Crime Stoppers Saskatchewan program. A strong media/internet-based awareness campaign is used to provide information to the public about the program and specific criminal incidents (see, for example, <http://www.saskcrimestoppers.com/>, <http://www.cstips.com/> or <http://www.saskatooncrimestoppers.com/index.html>). Awareness is also created through citizens and police service members becoming more informed by accessing available written and web-based material, attending information sessions and word-of-mouth communication.

S – 88 Training for firefighting must include rural conditions.

Government Response/Example(s):

- See S-86

S – 89 ACRE strongly reiterates the January 2001 recommendation for extension of high-speed Internet and cellular telephone services throughout Saskatchewan.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SaskTel provides access to high-speed phone lines and cellular coverage in order to keep pace with new technology.
- SaskTel has invested \$24 million to increase digital cell phone coverage to additional Saskatchewan communities. By 2003, digital cellular service will be available to more than 90 per cent of Saskatchewan's population, serving more than 270,000 square kilometres.
- In March 2002, SaskTel announced the expansion of its High Speed Internet service to 191 more Saskatchewan communities over the next two years under the province's CommunityNet high speed internet initiative.
- In June 2004, the second phase of CommunityNet was launched. An additional 71 communities are being added to the network. As well, most farmsteads and businesses within 30 kilometres of many existing CommunityNet centres will be able to access SaskTel's commercial high-speed network.
- Upon completion of the second phase of CommunityNet, more than 86 per cent of the Saskatchewan population will have access to high speed Internet.
- The federal government has made available \$7.5 million from BRAND (Broadband for Rural and Northern Development), \$2 million from the Northern Development Accord and \$525,000 from the federal/provincial WEPA over the past two years to fund Broadband (high speed internet) in Saskatchewan. The majority of benefactors live in rural, northern and Aboriginal communities. They also provide \$5 million for the first phase of CommunityNet and an additional \$2.25 million to connect all the libraries to high speed internet.

S – 90 The processing of meat from specialized livestock, particularly bison and elk is stumbling because of a lack of aggressive marketing and adequate local processing. Such a Saskatchewan plant would be desirable.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The province has been working with specialized livestock producers to increase the marketing of meat products (example Canadian Prairie Lamb). The government has been supportive of the development and implementation of national programs such as animal identification and on-farm quality assurance. These industry initiatives are part of the foundation of meat marketing. As well, the government continues to support producer efforts to develop value-chains and a federally inspected facility to accommodate specialized livestock.

S – 91 Generally, there is a lack of knowledge in Saskatchewan about the resource sector and its contribution to the rural economy. This committee recommends that the benefits of the resource sector, particularly in terms of employment, be built into the larger communications strategy to encourage rural Saskatchewan to welcome the economic opportunities and employment associated with resource development.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Key messages and activities that describe the benefits of the resource sector are integrated into SIR communication plans and activities, such as ministerial speeches, stakeholder events, and promotional information. Some of the communications activities planned by SIR include:
 - Resources and rural development messages will be represented in communications around the province's economic action plan.
 - Resource messages will be included in *Business Unlimited* (circulated to 10,000 people, many in rural Saskatchewan).
 - Messages will be incorporated into materials at department's display booth at trade shows, such as the Weyburn Oil Show.
 - The resource message will be included in rural events, where and when appropriate.
 - Rural outreach through ministerial tours and interviews with rural media.

- General and sector specific print advertising can incorporate resources/rural messaging, where appropriate.

S – 92 There are opportunities to use the province’s hardwood resource (poplar) for purposes including, but not limited to oriented strand board. The committee recommends that the province create an awareness of the opportunities for utilizing the province’s hardwood resource so that private investment and related employment can occur.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Government recognizes the economic development potential of the province’s hardwood resource. The government continues to inventory and map our timber resources, and uses this information to target specific hardwood using industries as potential investors in Saskatchewan. Additionally, the government is working with the province’s Forest Management Agreement holders to encourage best use of all ready allocated resources.

S – 93 Specific opportunities that should be investigated are listed in the Grains and Oilseeds Subcommittee report.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SAF, through its Agriculture Manufacturing strategy, has identified key tactics for the development of the grains and oilseed sectors.

S – 94 Intergenerational transfer of farms contains a number of additional considerations beyond those for new entrants. For example, retiring parents needs to have timely access to sufficient capital to retire and need to be confident that the risk of future financial difficulty of the farm will not jeopardize their retirement. Programming needs to be developed to address the specific issues of those exiting the industry.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Agri-business development staff presently provide business advice to farm families who are contemplating a change to their business operation.
- The APF, Renewal Chapter will advance the program to provide financial support to farmers to develop comprehensive business plans of which succession planning is a significant element.
- The income tax system currently supports such transfers by allowing for the deferral of tax on capital gains on the transfer of farm property from a parent to a child.

S – 95 It is recommended that the Saskatchewan Government examine mechanisms to form or expand existing community pastures or co-operatives through public, private, and corporate partnerships.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SAF has neither the resources, nor the mandate, to acquire additional lands to develop new community pastures.
- SAF has a long-term goal to improve the grazing capacity of existing pastures to be able to increase the number of livestock that can be grazed.

S – 96 First Nations control a large land resource that is an integral part of rural Saskatchewan. The committee recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan, in conjunction with the federal government, work with First Nations to facilitate development of First Nation resources.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Although decisions regarding the development of First Nations resources is left to individual First Nations, the government is willing to coordinate and develop linkages and partnerships between First Nations, industry and

government.

- The government has a number of working relationships with individual First Nations and the FSIN. In March 2003, the government entered into a new bilateral agreement with the FSIN to examine issues of mutual concern to First Nations and the province.
- A Common Table Protocol Agreement with Canada and the FSIN was established to discuss fiscal and jurisdictional matters related to self-government. This process is aimed at creating a new fiscal relationship in support of First Nation's self-government. The government is also participating in negotiations at the self-government table with the Meadow Lake Tribal Council and the Government of Canada.
- Saskatchewan helped sponsor an Aboriginal land conference in June that drew together Aboriginal peoples with a common interest in land and resource management from across the world.

S – 97 The committee recommends the province encourage training of rural residents, including First Nations, to participate in opportunities related to the forestry sector.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The involvement of rural residents and Aboriginal people in the development of the forest industry is a key component of the forest development strategy.
- The government supports the development of a Forest Centre of Excellence.
- Clarence Campeau Development Fund has a training component, although not specific to forestry. The Gabriel Dumont Institute, the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technology and the First Nations University also provide support to Aboriginal people in various fields and may be complementary to the forestry industry.

S – 98 SaskEnergy's approach to link rural offices by electronic communications technology and move work to offices with capacity is a model to be considered by provincial government departments, crown corporations and agencies to maintain a presence in rural Saskatchewan, avoid office closures and provide employment.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Where possible technology will continue to be considered as an alternative to allow offices and staff in rural locations to remain.
- Many government departments, Crown corporations and agencies maintain offices and provide employment opportunities in various parts of the province.

S – 99 Government should also consider the establishment of a feed processing facility that can research and demonstrate the processing, combining of constituents, and evaluating all manner of feed stocks for livestock.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SAF is funding a feed research chair at the University of Saskatchewan and will work in conjunction with the Prairie Feed Resource Centre. ADF has a Crops/Livestock Interface Program which determines nutritional and functional components of feed and their use in animal production.
- SAF provides two additional research chairs to be located at the WBDC to work on feed-related issues.
- Total funding for the three research chairs is \$495,000.
- SAF provides support to the Prairie Swine Centre and the WBDC which conduct research and analysis on feed for swine rations and beef feeding.

S – 100 Publicly funded agriculture development programs and services need to be maintained and enhanced to further the growth of Saskatchewan agriculture at primary production and value-added levels.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SAF's Development Division continue to provide a wide range of programs and services directed at primary production and value added services, these services include; agriculture business development branch, food

safety (quality assurance), specialists services supporting both crops and livestock development and funding through R&D to support the development of the agriculture industry in the province. R&D provides funding in areas such as crops, soil and environment, value added processing, and livestock.

S – 101 The federal and provincial governments implement strategies that improve the balance between public and private plant breeding efforts where the public supported breeding meets specific gaps or needs of Saskatchewan producers and result in public ownership of intellectual property.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The government, through the Strategic Research Program with the U of S, provides funding for plant breeding including: pulses (lentil, pea, chickpea, and bean), cereals (wheat, oat, barley) and flax. The University is granted ownership of intellectual property on the understanding that the University will use its best efforts to preserve and protect the intellectual and project property and pursue commercialization in Saskatchewan where possible. In addition, funding for plant breeding projects is provided under the SAF – ADF Program. The same ownership rights are granted to the University under these contracts.

S – 102 Research related to crop varieties should be focused on variety development that results in specific, profitable, market opportunities for producers.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Under the SAF strategic plan one of the objectives is to have increased livestock production and diversification to higher value crops. Two of the priority areas for SAF under this strategy include flax and pulses. These crops have the potential to create increased diversity and profitability in the agricultural sector. The federal APF will provide funding in areas of Food Safety and Quality, Renewal, Environment, Science and Innovation and Business Risk management and corresponding provincial funding will address some of the areas noted above.
- In addition SAF provides R&D funding to support the development of new crops through the Strategic Research Program at the U of S and also provides funding through the ADF for R&D projects that are targeted at crops and value-added/processing that will result in increased profitability for the agri-industry.

- SAF also supports seven research chairs at the Crop Development Centre at the University of Saskatchewan.
- A new strategic advisory board for the Crop Development Centre has been established.

S – 103 That SAFRR support research into alternate methods of control to strychnine for ground squirrel and pocket gopher control.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The department partners with the federal government and the Irrigation Industry through the Irrigated Crop Diversification Corporation (ICDC) in the development of pocket gopher control strategies. Six hundred people have participated in ICDC field events. Through this work, a private practitioner is now doing control on a per acre fee basis in addition to an Irrigation District ditch rider.
- The Department of Animal and Poultry Science with \$70,000 of support out of the Agriculture Development Fund is developing mechanisms for more effective control of the gopher population in Saskatchewan. This three year study is looking to increasing the toxicity of common rodenticides.
- SAF, AAFRD and the University of Lethbridge are reviewing a proposal from an MSc student to assess the economic impacts caused by the Richardson's Ground Squirrel.
- A Western committee with representatives from SAF, AAFRD, SARM, Alberta Ag County Fieldmen, Canadian Wild Life Service, University of Lethbridge, Pest Management Regulatory Authority (PMRA), Nu-Gro IP International and Maxim Chemicals have developed a Richardson's Ground Squirrel Pest Management Profile identifying areas for potential research.
- Future ground squirrel programs will be developed around an Integrated Pest Management Strategy. The PMRA is assisting Alberta and Saskatchewan with development of this Integrated Pest Management Plan.

S – 104 The provincial government provides adequate resources for research into new crops and value added opportunities for existing grains and oilseeds.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SAF places a high priority by funding research for new crops, oilseeds, cereals, and value added. The Agriculture Development Fund (\$7.4 million) through project funding and money provided to the Strategic Research Program (\$3.3 million) at the U of S are specific programs that support research for these crop areas.
- See S – 102 for other examples.

S – 105 SAFRR should recognize marketing as an important component of new crop development and value added initiatives and that marketing be incorporated into the mandate of the Agriculture Development Fund (ADF).

Government Response/Example(s):

- The market research is eligible for funding under ADF.
- Under SAF's ADF projects that are approved for funding must be able to demonstrate marketability. One of the goals of ADF is to carry out research activities that will have the greatest return for the Saskatchewan agriculture industry. The development of a new Strategic Research Program at the U of S is intended to develop research capacity that will provide targeted research for the province. The new evaluation system for ADF project funding specifically addresses potential economic impact.

S – 106 The industry has developed a niche of expertise in the development of marginal reserves and the province must continue to support relevant oil and gas research and development, through facilities such as the Petroleum Technology Research Center.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Government of Saskatchewan renewed and enhanced its funding commitment to The PTRC with the

intent of ensuring its long-term viability.

- The Government of Saskatchewan renewed the Saskatchewan Petroleum Research Incentive.
- In addition, the government continues to ensure the continuation of research activities through independent funding requests by the PTRC, University of Regina and U of S related to this initiative.
- Funding of \$1.65 million was provided to PTRC through the Western Economic Partnership Agreement for VAPEX enhanced oil recovery research and to build modeling and risk assessment capacity related to CO2 storage.

S – 107 The provincial government should also support the Forest Centre of Excellence which deals with value-added research and the identification of market opportunities.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The government supports the development of a Forest Centre of Excellence and has been working with various private and public organizations to bring this concept to reality.
- The Saskatchewan Forest Centre is currently working toward establishing itself to be of national importance in the areas of testing and certification processes.
- The government has been providing operational funding and is prepared to entertain project proposals fitting with the WEPA criteria.

S – 108 Incentives to promote exploration and development of natural gas in Saskatchewan should be considered.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Government has accepted all the recommendations of GSH Land Use Strategy Review Committee enabling gas

development to proceed in the ES2 area of the GSH and is also adding more protected land to the area and commissioning a major environmental study of the entire area. A major environmental study of the entire area is currently underway. An important component of the study is to identify portions of the area where gas development may occur. Knowing which areas in the GSH are approved for natural gas development will benefit industry by enabling them to better plan their acquisition of natural gas rights, exploration and development activities.

- Measures taken by TransGas to promote the upstream development of the natural gas industry fall into four categories:
 - Direct fiscal measures - TransGas has reduced natural gas transportation rates for the second year in a row effective November 1, 2004.
 - Marketing and promotion - TransGas undertakes a number of market efforts in addition to our web presence and periodic press releases to promote the upstream industry in the province. TransGas coordinates an annual Saskatchewan Natural Gas Advantage Workshop in Calgary to promote the industry within Saskatchewan.
 - Responsive to customer - TransGas' well-established customer dialogue process helps guide TransGas policy formulation to respond to our customers needs.
 - Customer connection process - TransGas prides itself in quick turnaround between producer commitment and having receipt points ready to flow gas.

- Royalty/incentive examples:
 - The Saskatchewan Petroleum Research Incentive.
 - A new lower royalty/tax structure was recently introduced by the province for gas wells drilled on and after October 1, 2002. A lower Corporation Capital Tax Surcharge rate was introduced at the same time for these newly drilled wells. Saskatchewan's royalty/tax rates for new gas wells are very competitive with Alberta and British Columbia.

- Regulatory changes:

On July 31, 2003, Industry and Resources made regulatory changes to reduce the regulatory burden of the natural gas industry. These changes included:

- expansion of the area of the province eligible for in-fill drilling, which increases the number of potential locations to drill a natural gas well;
- expanded target areas for gas wells, reducing the number of applications for off-target wells industry needs to submit; and,
- reduced regulatory requirements on the logging and testing of newly drilled natural gas wells in the province, reducing industry costs.

Supplemental Transportation Recommendations **February 2004**

Transportation Recommendations & Government Actions

T – 1 The province, in consultation with stakeholders, actively monitors and develops, if warranted, a north/south international trade corridor system.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT works with neighboring jurisdictions to improve north-south and east-west road links by upgrading infrastructure, improving border crossings and enhancing trade corridor opportunities. The focus of the discussions has been expediting border crossings in light of increased security measures.
- DHT concluded a corridor study in 2002, which identified six corridors of potential interest to our province:
 - The CANAMEX Corridor;
 - Camino Real Corridor;
 - Interstate Route 35 Corridor;
 - Falls-to-Falls Corridor;
 - Ports to Plains Corridor; and
 - The Heartland Expressway.

These corridors presently do not terminate at Saskatchewan border crossings, but would have potential for Saskatchewan/US trade. Air connections and air access are also of interest as they allow Saskatchewan residents to access US destination points. This is important to Saskatchewan in so far as it may be a deciding factor in whether to locate in the province.

- Two primary current initiatives are the Northern Great Plains Transportation, Trade and Economic Development Initiative and an agreement by Western Premiers and Governors to facilitate further development of cross-border transportation initiatives.

T – 2 The province update and print the Rural Road Classification System map to assist in corridor development. The traffic flow maps should be produced in an updated format of the line width graph format, both on a provincial and municipal basis to assist in the development of the traffic corridors.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SARM published a new road map in the spring of 2005.
- DHT is exploring the production of traffic flow maps using the line graph format for road classes 2 to 5 for the municipal road system. Municipal roads are counted on a four to five year rotation for this year it would not be possible to prepare current annual flow maps for all municipalities.
- A line width format to designate traffic counts on a provincial highway map would be difficult to read given that the traffic volumes ranges are essentially 0 to 2300 vehicles per day. It would be more practical for the DHT to assess the feasibility of preparing line width maps for the areas for palling purposes in their identification of traffic corridor on an as needed basis.

T – 3 The province updates design requirements and inspection of municipal constructed roads.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT will provide road construction standards for low traffic volume roads (generally classes 4 & 5). This applies to both provincial highways and municipal roads.
- A review of low volume road standards is in progress.

T – 4 Municipalities need to be cautious when issuing primary weight permits to ensure that any bridges along the route are able to withstand the increased weight.

Government Response/Example(s):

- See F – 11, S – 54 and S – 61.

T – 5 The province determines the relationship between infrastructure investment and the provincial GDP and incorporates the findings into investment strategies.

Government Response/Example(s):

- All factors are considered when assessing investments. Investment in infrastructure, generally, increases GDP. Decisions on where, when and how much investment to make in provincial infrastructure (roads, highways, power and gas lines) are made by Cabinet.
- This remains under active examination by the Infrastructure Subcommittee of ACRE.

T – 6 Strengthen the relationship and linkages between Area Transportation Planning Committees and economic development.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SIR officials are working with ATPC to address transportation issues.

- However, ATPC Chair persons prefer that the ATPC's remain in an advisory capacity.
- The SARM "Clearing the Path" transportation subcommittee is also examining this.

T – 7 The province, appropriate transportation authorities and industry develop strategies, schedules and facilities that enhance passenger and freight multi-modal services in order to facilitate and promote tourism and trade.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The province consults with stakeholders and service providers on an ongoing basis as well as monitoring federal transportation legislation, regulations and policy to ensure that these instruments create an enabling environment.

T – 8 The province continue to be involved in the Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) development to reduce traffic (truck) monitoring costs and assist in the development of the worldwide industry.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Transport Compliance Branch is researching, developing and deploying effective and efficient Intelligent Transportation System solutions for monitoring commercial vehicle operations in Saskatchewan.
- DHT has entered into an agreement with Transport Canada to cost share equally the deployment of three sites that monitor trucks through weigh in motion and camera technology.
- The enhanced monitoring of the trucking industry results in better protection of the infrastructure from overweight vehicles.
- DHT also entered into a partnership with International Road Dynamics Inc., Transport Canada, The U of S and Constance Consulting to conceptually design remote controlled weigh stations that could be operated

from another scale or a central location.

T – 9 The province develop a winter weights regime based on the number of frost days for the various regions of the province.

Government Response/Example(s):

- This has been addressed through recent amendments to subsection 2(1) of *The Vehicle Weight and Dimension Regulations, 1999*.

T – 10 That the Saskatchewan Assessment Management Agency (SAMA) change its criteria for assessing the value of property owned by short line railways, especially in instances where there has been large changes in traffic from the base assessment period.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The rates developed in the SAMA Assessment Manual are established and then applied for a four-year period. The current 1998 Base Year Manual examined the average net tonnages from the period of January 1, 1995 to December 31, 1997, and established a rate per net tonnage based on this data. Rates are typically not changed between base years to provide stability to the assessment system.
- With the 2005 revaluation the rates have been reexamined and take into consideration the feedback received from the short line railways. Rate changes will be made to address any inequities that may have existed (net tonnage increased and rates decreased). Through consultations, it appears that this issue has now been resolved.

T – 11 The province review its present policy of maintenance of highways in urban centres. In cases where

the province does not have equal or total control on speed, signage, access, and intersectional occurrences, then the maintenance of these portions should become the responsibility of the urban municipalities.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Subsection 153(2) of *The Urban Municipality Act, 1984* and subsection 12(2) of *The Cities Act* allows the province to assign responsibility for maintenance of a highway to the urban municipality or city. Agreements are negotiated on a case by case basis.

T – 12 The province review whether 1000 (or less) people in a community is the appropriate level, or whether it should be higher, for its policy of maintaining highways through these communities.

Government Response/Example(s):

- A DHT review of highways through urban areas is in progress. The review will form the basis for policy development relating to urban jurisdictional issues. DHT expects to have this review completed in 2005-06.

Phase II Final Recommendations
May, 2005

ACRE Recommendations & Government Actions

Business Development

- P -- 1 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan work with the Government of Canada, and with municipal governments in Saskatchewan, to create a Task Force that will:**
- a. examine the programs and services offered for rural economic development from the three levels of government with the aim of reducing the number and improving the effectiveness of those programs and services; and**
 - b. examine the rural economic development delivery system with the aim of eliminating the overlapping mandates and jurisdictions, and of improving the effectiveness of that delivery system.**

Government Response/Example(s):

P -- 2 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan work with the Government of Canada to develop a substantial source of equity funding by implementing a Saskatchewan Equity Investment Tax Deferral Program, which will make any Saskatchewan resident or corporation who wishes to defer taxes eligible to invest in our province's rural economic development.

Government Response/Example(s):

P -- 3 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan encourage and provide support to Saskatchewan's economic development associations to examine the potential of an "angel" investment network to increase equity funding available to rural Saskatchewan businesses.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Government of Saskatchewan supports the development of an integrated angel investment network to enhance equity placement within Saskatchewan-based small-and medium-sized businesses. In May 2004, the province along with regional and federal partners, hosted an Angel Investors session, where experts in the Angel investment communities from Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario discussed the lessons-learned in establishing successful angel networks within in their respective region. Feedback received from Angel investors in attendance at the event indicated a preference to the establishment of a member managed investment network.

P -- 4 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan build on existing business groups, programs, and resources (i.e. Chambers of Commerce, Women Entrepreneurs, Saskatchewan Council for Community Development, etc.) to create an effective network of leaders and mentors. As well, resources need to be provided that will ensure that community boards and entrepreneurs have access to the information necessary to implement effective governance systems.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SIR and RD continue to move forward and work with several partners in developing a "Business Mentorship" initiative.

P -- 5 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan facilitate the initiatives necessary to improve the liquidity of investments in community projects and businesses in rural Saskatchewan.

Government Response/Example(s):

P -- 6 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan:

- a) **replace the current tax credit program on capital purchases used for manufacturing and processing with a PST exemption program; and**
- b) **develop and make public a plan for:**
 - i) **the systematic elimination of the Corporate Capital Tax, and**
 - ii) **the staged reduction of the Corporate Income Tax to ensure Saskatchewan's businesses can stay competitive with those in other provinces.**

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Vicq Commission is currently examining into all aspects of business taxation in the province. Once its report is issued government will assess its recommendations within the context of the 2006-07 budget development process.

P -- 7 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan simplify and develop an integrated approach (preferably a one-window contact) for the business development approval process from project conception through the start-up of the enterprise.

Government Response/Example(s):

- A new one-stop website for Business Permits and Licenses (BizPaL), to be developed in partnership with federal and municipal governments, will help streamline the business approval process by providing developers with a list of required permits and licenses required by three levels of government and providing links to online forms.

P -- 8 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan mandate Saskatchewan Government Insurance to aggressively develop the partnerships and the policies that will allow affordable insurance packages to meet the needs of Saskatchewan's rural businesses.

Government Response/Example(s):

P -- 9 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan provide seed money and facilitate the implementation of the “Saskatchewan Works Fund,” as proposed by Saskatchewan Agrivision Corporation (SAC) and the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, because this proposal recognizes the needs of rural businesses and will provide a source of capital investment for rural economic development that is not being met by other funding mechanisms.

Government Response/Example(s):

- SIR’s involvement in the Labour-sponsored Venture Capital Corporation program is limited to the issuance of tax credits under the program. Additional funding would require a separate budget allocation that would be determined through the annual budget process.

Crown Land

P -- 10 ACRE recommends that, through consultation with stakeholders, the Government of Saskatchewan develop an overarching goal for Crown land management. The goal needs to address:

- a) the purpose for the Crown holding Crown land;**
- b) the criteria for balancing economic, environmental, and social considerations; and,**
- c) the criteria for retaining or disposing of Crown land.**

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Crown land recommendations have been discussed with the Crown Land Stakeholders’ Forum to solicit feedback. Initial discussions focused on this recommendation and, in particular, which lands could be disposed of. Agreement was reached that, in principle, as long as lands had the same protection as it does when held by the Crown, it could be sold. The department is working on a strategy that, among other things, will address this recommendation.

- The DHT land group was an active committee member on both the Steering Committee and the Inter-Agency Committee. The department has one of the largest Crown holdings in the province and therefore, must be included in consultations to establish policies related to Crown Land Management.

P -- 11 ACRE recommends that the Crown land inventory be divided into two categories, based on land type and the overarching goal established respecting Crown land use. These two categories should be managed, according to the following:

- a) Land that is deemed important to be retained by the Crown should be administered by one government agency mandated to use the land to facilitate economic activity while ensuring it is protected and preserved for future generations. Appropriate linkages must be coordinated with affected departments to ensure the management of the land meets broad government goals as mandated by the various departments. While some economies are expected through an amalgamation of the land holdings into one agency, adequate resources must be provided to the agency in order that the true potential of the portfolio can be achieved. Appropriate fees need to be developed for new initiatives that recognize the rights being disposed and the factors limiting use.**
- b) Land that is deemed surplus¹ should be managed with a mandate to dispose of and obtain market value for the land. The time frame for disposal should recognize: existing agreements; revenue for government; the impact large blocks of land entering the market will have on land values; opportunities to meet conservation objectives through vehicles like conservation agreements; and economic development opportunities.**

¹ Includes all lands that are no longer required to meet legal obligations (e.g. Treaty Land Entitlement (TLE)) or for environmental (ie. wildlife, fragile, representative areas, etc.); economic (i.e. forestry, sand & gravel, minerals, etc.); or, social (i.e. public use, heritage, etc.) reasons. The process to identify the specific lands should be developed through further stakeholder consultation.

Government Response/Example(s):

- See P –10. Part of the strategy being developed will determine what type of organizational changes should be made and which lands should be disposed of.

- The DHT land group was an active committee member on both the Steering Committee and the Inter-Agency Committee. The department has one of the largest Crown holdings in the province and therefore, must be included in consultations to establish policies related to Crown Land Management.

P -- 12 ACRE recommends that the economic opportunities associated with non-traditional land uses, and in particular, where these uses can co-exist with others, be promoted, ensuring existing rights are not altered without appropriate compensation. A model to determine appropriate compensation needs to be developed that accounts for the actual impact of the new/existing activity on the existing user's operation, including loss of use, nuisance and overall impact to the existing management and an appeal mechanism put in place where the model does not adequately compensate the existing user.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The department is preparing an option paper on a compensation model for the oil and gas industry. Once established, it in turn can be used for other land uses.

No additional work on promotion of alternative uses is contemplated until such time as a decision is made on which lands will remain Crown owned in the long-term.

- The DHT land group was an active committee member on both the Steering Committee and the Inter-Agency Committee. The department has one of the largest Crown holdings in the province and therefore, must be included in consultations to establish policies related to Crown Land Management.

P -- 13 ACRE recommends that clear processes be included in regulation to allow the land administering agencies to deal effectively with actions that result in, or have the potential to result in, ecological damage to the land. The processes need to be progressive and, where appropriate, provide opportunities for corrective action. However, they must also allow the agencies to deal with abuse effectively where the abuser fails to correct his/her approach and the land is at risk.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Work will not begin on this recommendation until a long term strategy is developed.
- The DHT land group was an active committee member on both the Steering Committee and the Inter-Agency Committee. The department has one of the largest Crown holdings in the province and therefore must be included in consultations to establish policies related to Crown Land Management

P -- 14 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan develop and adopt provincial integrated resource management planning standards that ensure the provincial interests are accounted for in regional and local planning exercises. Government also needs to ensure that the planning process is made as “proponent friendly” as possible in order to encourage economic development.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Not yet started.
- The DHT land group was an active committee member on both the Steering Committee and the Inter-Agency Committee. The department has one of the largest Crown holdings in the province and therefore, must be included in consultations to establish policies related to Crown Land Management.

P -- 15 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan incorporate into land use policies recognition of the existing rights associated with a disposition, and communicate with lease holders, in order to avoid confusion if additional rights are extended to other land users.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Work has begun on preparing Fact Sheets that will be used to communicate with lease holders.

- The DHT land group was an active committee member on both the Steering Committee and the Inter-Agency Committee. The department has one of the largest Crown holdings in the province and therefore, must be included in consultations to establish policies related to Crown Land Management.

P -- 16 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan ensure contractual obligations to First Nations are honoured, including Treaty Land Entitlements or TLE and Specific Land Claims. The commitments made to First Nations under these agreements, as well as commitments to third party interests (i.e. lease and permit holders), as they relate to TLE and Specific Land Claims, must be communicated in a way that enhances the understanding of both First Nations and non-First Nations people.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The policies and practices of all Departments follow the commitments made in the Treaty Land Entitlement Agreements. It is the responsibility of First Nations and Métis Relations to monitor this and ensure it occurs.

Fact Sheets on TLE are used to communicate with Saskatchewan residents. Work has begun on reviewing their adequacy and identifying the need for new Fact Sheets. As well, a review of the distribution of these Fact Sheets to ensure better communication with First Nations and non-First Nations people is underway.

- The DHT land group was an active committee member on both the Steering Committee and the Inter-Agency Committee. The department has one of the largest Crown holdings in the province and therefore, must be included in consultations to establish policies related to Crown Land Management.
- First Nations and Métis Relations ensures that the policies and practices of all Departments are consistent with the commitments made in the Treaty Land Entitlement Agreements. Work has begun on the preparation of Fact Sheets that will be used to communicate with First Nations and non-First Nations people.

P -- 17 ACRE recommends that the outdated *Provincial Lands Act* and regulations under the *Act* be re-written. The authorities contained in the *Act* need to be updated and modernized and the legislation needs to:

- a) Account for all provincially owned Crown land;**
- b) Respect the existing rights;**
- c) Define, assess, and regulate multi-use opportunities;**
- d) Define, assess, and regulate non-traditional use opportunities;**
- e) Provide alternative disposition options (i.e. licenses) that result in fewer rights being disposed of in some circumstances;**
- f) Provide authority to deal with mismanagement of land where the land is being harmed;**
- g) Require use of integrated resource management tools when making land use decisions;**
- h) Provide authority to dispose of lands that are deemed surplus to the province's needs;**
- i) Provide authority to acquire lands that are deemed to be in the public interest;**
- j) Balance the disposition of private benefits with the overall public good;**
- k) Respect the rights allocated through a disposition and fairly compensate the holder of these rights when impacted by other dispositions;**
- l) Re-affirm the commitment of the province to settle TLE and Specific Land Claims; and**
- m) Provide the flexibility to address future changes to land use needs.**

Government Response/Example(s):

- This recommendation will not start until a decision on a long term strategy is made.
- The DHT land group was an active committee member on both the Steering Committee and the Inter-Agency Committee. The department has one of the largest Crown holdings in the province and therefore, must be included in consultations to establish policies related to Crown Land Management.

Infrastructure

P -- 18 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan promote and support a regional approach to infrastructure development.

Government Response/Example(s):

- DHT is organized into three operational regions, within each region; infrastructure is developed/maintained according to regional priority and within the available budget. The factors determining regional priority include the Principal Highway Network, Regional Transportation System, paved highways, traffic volume, and road conditions.
- DHT also works closely with the ATPCs to have a regional approach to highway infrastructure development, for issues such as grain transportation and weight management.
- A DHT review of highways through urban areas is in progress. The review will form the basis for policy development relating to urban jurisdictional issues. DHT expects to have this review completed in 2005-06.
- DHT is working with SARM to develop a truck freight route corridor and a cost recovery fee structure that would compensate municipalities for the additional maintenance costs and loss of road life resulting from primary weight and concentrated truck hauls. SARM has instructed the committee to explore options for a DTFRS. A study has been approved to assist in measuring the road consumption by heavy weight vehicles on gravel roads and preparation has begun for the development of options to implement a DTFRS in Saskatchewan.
- DHT provides technical engineering advice to municipalities applying for funding through federal programs such as the PGRP.

P -- 19 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan, in conjunction with the private sector, develop a provincial economic development strategy, and a supportive rural infrastructure strategy, while ensuring a high level of coordination and cooperation among and within provincial government departments and Crown corporations for the implementation of these strategies.

Government Response/Example(s):

- A provincial economic action plan is expected to be released autumn 2005, reflecting input from Centennial Economic Summit.

Rural Employment

P -- 20 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan establish a Labour-Business Council, which would focus on private sector labour issues including those in rural Saskatchewan. A mechanism is required for labour and business to foster dialogue, develop mutual respect and develop areas of agreement.

- a) The council would be made up of:**
 - 1. Six representatives recommended by the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, who would then appoint a co-chair;**
 - 2. Six representatives recommended by the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, who would then appoint a co-chair; and**
 - 3. Secretariat: Saskatchewan Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization, Labour, and Industry and Resources. The committee would report to these ministers.**
- b) Functions would include an evaluation of the manner in which the legislation is functioning, the identification of problems and recommendations for legislative amendments.**
- c) It is important that each organization be allowed to assign the representatives without obtaining consensus from government or from the other party.**
- d) The committee would start with “big picture” discussions to develop a relationship and build trust. They would then move to discuss more controversial issues.**

Government Response/Example(s):

- The government believes establishing such a forum to cooperatively address issues of common concern could grow Saskatchewan's economy by promoting harmonious workplaces and building a healthy, highly-skilled workforce. Nevertheless, when government explored this concept in 2002, it was deemed unworkable.
- The departments of Labour, Industry and Resources, and Rural Development met in Summer 2005, to discuss this issue. The province is always willing to collaborate with labour and business to resolve specific employment issues. With respect to ACRE's recommendation, however, the aforementioned three departments believe that, given the ACRE Employment Subcommittee's: (1) familiarity with regional stakeholders; and (2) expertise in rural economic development and employment issues, that group may be best positioned to lead on the creation of a Labour-Business Council, rather than government.

P -- 21 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan improve access to apprenticeship training in rural Saskatchewan by introducing a program similar to Alberta's Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP is a special program that allows students to get started on an apprenticeship during high school and get paid for their work).

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Government of Saskatchewan recognizes the importance of allowing students to get started on apprenticeship training in rural Saskatchewan. The ATCC has enhanced the high school to Apprenticeship Program and two projects were piloted in 2004-05. The ATCC is expanding the initiative in 2005-06 with additional pilots in Saskatoon and northern Saskatchewan. The ATCC will investigate the prospect of province-wide implementation in 2006-07.

P -- 22 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan press the federal government to speed up the time taken for apprentices to receive Employment Insurance benefits when on education leave.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Government of Saskatchewan would encourage the federal government to examine improving efficiency with respect to benefit payment. However, it is noted that the first time apprentices in technical training apply for EI benefits they must serve a two-week waiting period before receiving benefits. In each level of training thereafter, there is no waiting period. The length of time to receive benefits depends largely upon the processing times in the federally administered EI system.

P -- 23 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan establish an apprenticeship training tax credit that would encourage employers to hire and train apprentices in certain skilled trades.

Government Response/Example(s):

P -- 24 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan provide further funding and that the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission expand its efforts to recruit and train Aboriginal apprentices.

Government Response/Example(s):

P -- 25 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan create a trade job bank that matches potential employers and/or sponsors with interested employees/students.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Government of Saskatchewan through Saskatchewan Learning, Saskatchewan Community Resources and Employment, and the Federal Department of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada have partnered to develop the SaskNetWork web site (www.sasknetwork.ca) to help the people of Saskatchewan connect to the resources they need in the areas of jobs, work, education and training, career planning, self-employment, labour market information, financial help and the workplace.

- The SaskJobs section of the SaskNetWork web site provides job seekers and employers with assistance to find and post employment opportunities in Saskatchewan. In the first quarter of 2005/06 there were 6856 jobs posted. This is an increase of 1821 from the number of jobs posted in the last quarter.

P -- 26 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan increase flexibility in compulsory training ratios related to apprenticeship certification for rural and small businesses.

Government Response/Example(s):

P -- 27 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan place a renewed emphasis on training for the trades, and enhance trade learning by providing more funding for SIAST and the Regional Colleges.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Government of Saskatchewan recognizes the importance of training and trades. Additional funding of \$188,000 was provided to the ATCC in the 2005-06 budget under CareerStart to create 75 new apprenticeship technical training opportunities. Training institutions' needs for additional funding will continue to be reviewed as part off the budget planning process.

P -- 28 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan increase the in-community rural delivery of various types of training through the Regional Colleges, SIAST, universities, and other means. New delivery options for rural Saskatchewan need to be explored that provide for both theory and practical training. Additional funding would be required to fund additional training in rural Saskatchewan.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Government of Saskatchewan recognizes the need to ensure training opportunities are accessible throughout the province. In 2005-06, Saskatchewan Learning provided additional funding to regional colleges

and Dumont Technical Institute. Training institutions' needs for additional funding will continue to be reviewed as part of the budget planning process. The ATCC has been asked to lead a process, in collaboration with SIAST and regional colleges, to investigate opportunities for enhanced apprenticeship technical training in rural and northern Saskatchewan.

- In May 2005 the Minister of Learning established a Training System Review Panel to make recommendations concerning how best to position Saskatchewan's training system to meet the needs of Saskatchewan's labour force in the future. The review will cover programs and services currently offered by SIAST, regional colleges and ATCC.

P -- 29 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan require primary schools to begin career counseling in grade school to increase awareness of careers (especially trades) and understanding of training choices, and require secondary schools to enhance career development and counseling services.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Government of Saskatchewan agrees, and has for a number of years, required that Career Guidance be taught to all students, Grades six - nine. A career development component to instruction is in the process of being integrated throughout the curriculum at all grade levels. The *Blueprint for Life/Work Design*, a framework of career development competencies and indicators, is being used to guide the new instructional objectives being integration into the curriculum.
- Saskatchewan Learning is partnering with the Saskatoon and District Industry-Education Council to conduct a pilot that will work closely with industry and employers to enhance the delivery of career services through an internet-based web portal originally developed in North Carolina and re-designed to meet the needs of Saskatchewan people. The pilot is known as Futures for Kids and will span an 18-24 month duration.
- As well, Saskatchewan Learning is currently working with the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission on the development of a Youth Apprenticeship Initiative. The goal of this program will be to raise the awareness of and improve the attitudes toward opportunities in the skills trades and technologies area for students, parents and teachers.

P -- 30 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan make further efforts to build relationships between Aboriginal individuals, communities and groups, involved governments, educational institutions and employers to provide adequate opportunities for Aboriginal students. More must be done to respond to the training needs and initiatives of Aboriginal people.

Government Response/Example(s):

- Through the Aboriginal Employment Development Program, First Nations and Métis Relations has entered into over 60 partnerships with private and public sector employers, universities, training institutions, governments and First Nations and Métis organizations to address barriers to employment and communicate employment and education opportunities to Aboriginal people.

P -- 31 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan increase Basic Education programming and the Provincial Training Allowance to enroll more students in Basic Education.

Government Response/Example(s):

- The Government of Saskatchewan recognizes the need to increase ABE programs throughout the province. In 2005-06, ABE was allocated an additional \$390K to boost, capacity to provide programs.
- The Provincial Training Allowance budget was also increased so that the new students would have income support available.

P -- 32 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan substantially expand the existing programs (Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program and Migrant Workers' Program) in response to identified skill and worker shortages.

Government Response/Example(s):

P -- 33 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan continue ongoing identification of employment skill needs and labour shortages.

Government Response/Example(s):

P -- 34 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan enhance cultural and other support mechanisms for immigrants, such as language, settlement funding and recognition of bona fide foreign credentials.

Government Response/Example(s):

P -- 35 ACRE recommends that the Government of Saskatchewan aggressively examine the barriers faced by immigrants, and promote immigration programs to employers and potential immigrants.

Government Response/Example(s):