



**Action Committee on the Rural Economy
(ACRE)**

Monitoring Committee Report

October 2006



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary.....	2
1. Context.....	3
2. Process.....	4
3. Findings.....	5
4. Foundations for Economic Growth.....	7
5. Next Steps.....	16
6. Summary of Appendices document.....	18



ACRE Vision

“A network of strong, dynamic rural communities all across Saskatchewan – communities that can grow and prosper through sustainable rural economic development; a viable agricultural sector that provides opportunity and prosperity for today’s and tomorrow’s rural residents. Communities where people are secure in the knowledge that they and their children can look forward to a bright future.”

Executive Summary

Since its inception, the Action Committee on the Rural Economy (ACRE) has examined the rural economy and provided the Government of Saskatchewan with 220 recommendations for action. ACRE’s Monitoring Committee has taken on the task of examining the province’s response to each of these recommendations.

Overall, the Monitoring Committee believes that the Province of Saskatchewan has listened to ACRE and has made considerable effort to implement ACRE’s recommendations. The government has dealt with almost two-thirds (143) of ACRE’s recommendations to the satisfaction of the Monitoring Committee and has begun the work to implement the remaining third (77) of ACRE’s recommendations.

The Monitoring Committee’s mandate was to review government progress on implementing the recommendations submitted by ACRE to the provincial government and identify priority areas for work that remains to be done. The Committee has carefully considered each of the remaining 77 recommendations, identified those that it considers to be important in establishing the foundation for growth in the province and grouped

them into seven theme areas. The report provides a discussion of the “foundation” recommendations in each theme area and identifies other “Works in Progress” recommendations that also fall within that subject area. The theme areas are: immigration; co-ordination; infrastructure; taxation; business/labour; value-added; and Crown land use.

To ensure that the provincial government continues to act on implementing these foundation recommendations as well as the remainder of the 77 outstanding recommendations, the Monitoring Committee recommends that ACRE continue to review the government’s progress with respect to these recommendations on an annual basis.

Throughout the review process, the committee was cognizant of the need for all stakeholders, including the aboriginal population, to be engaged in the development of economic growth in the province. Good work has been done by the people of Saskatchewan and the Government of Saskatchewan to improve the economic climate in rural Saskatchewan. The progress made in implementing ACRE’s recommendations demonstrates that we can work together to accomplish our objectives, and build a prosperous future.

Background: Saskatchewan’s Aboriginal Population

Members of the ACRE Monitoring Committee recognize that Saskatchewan’s Aboriginal community is an integral part of rural and urban Saskatchewan. The needs of the Aboriginal population have been considered implicitly in all of the Committee’s deliberations and recommendations. As an example, recommendation F-18 speaks to the importance of engaging Aboriginal people in business opportunities. As well, recommendation P-24 states the provision of financial support and the expansion of recruitment and training of Aboriginal apprentices is critical.



1. Context

ACRE held its first meeting in 2000, when 45 rural stakeholders met for the first time. ACRE's mandate allowed the group to study several aspects of the rural economy and to develop recommendations for action by the Province of Saskatchewan that would strengthen and improve the rural economy. Since 2000, ACRE members have conducted research, met with other rural stakeholders and organizations, studied best practices in other countries, and held public consultations. This work resulted in several reports and a total of 220 recommendations for action by the Province of Saskatchewan.

In November 2002, the Province of Saskatchewan expanded ACRE's mandate. The revised mandate directed ACRE to continue investigating the rural economy and making recommendations, as well as to monitor the province's implementation of the actions recommended by ACRE.

The ACRE Committee members, supported by ACRE's Co-Chair, Deputy Premier Clay Serby, has insisted that ACRE's reports and

recommendations would not 'sit on a shelf', but would be used in the development of provincial public policy and programming. The expanded mandate provided ACRE with a method to hold government accountable for implementing ACRE's recommendations.

To meet the demands of its expanded mandate, ACRE created a "Monitoring Committee", a group of ACRE members that would examine the province's response to each of the 220 recommendations and identify important first steps to establishing foundations for growth in the province. This report is the result of the work of the Monitoring Committee and provides an overview of the work of the Province of Saskatchewan to implement ACRE's recommendations. Appendices referred to in this document provide a complete listing of each of the 220 recommendations, the government's response to the recommendations, and brief comments by the Monitoring Committee on the government's response. Government responses reviewed were current as of the fall of 2005 with some updated information provided where requested by the Monitoring Committee.

Background: ACRE's Research

In both Phase I and Phase II, ACRE conducted much of its work through smaller subcommittees of ACRE members. This structure allowed ACRE members to focus on one area and gain an in-depth knowledge of the issues before making recommendations.

In Phase I, ACRE members formed ten subcommittees: Agriculture; Agri-Value; Community in Evolution; Farm Structure and Farm Income; the Resource Sector; Rural Manufacturing and Construction; the Rural Service Sector; Tools for Economic Development; Grains and Oilseeds; and Transportation.

Phase II followed with four new ACRE subcommittees. They reviewed issues related to: Business Development; Crown Lands; Rural Infrastructure; and Rural Employment.



2. Process

The Monitoring Committee is made up of 19 ACRE members. Committee members were self-selected – that is, any ACRE members that were interested and available were welcome to take part in the Committee. Once Monitoring Committee members were identified, Thad Trefiak and Deb Ehmann were selected from that group to co-chair the committee.

At the Committee's first meeting, members realized that the best use could be made of their time if the Committee split into two working groups: the Agriculture and Transportation Working Group and the Economic Development Working Group. The 220 recommendations were divided into these two groups.

The work of both working groups was thorough and demanding. The Government of Saskatchewan, through the Department of Regional Economic and Co-operative Development (RECD), provided the working groups with summaries of the work government has done in relation to each of the 220 recommendations. Members examined these responses carefully, assessing the provincial actions related to each individual recommendation in order to determine if the government's actions adequately met ACRE's intent.

In assessing the Government of Saskatchewan's actions, the committee classified the 220 recommendations as either "Accepted", or as "Works in Progress". In classifying recommendations as "Accepted", ACRE

Background: ACRE's Recommendations

In Phase I and II, ACRE created a total of 220 recommendations. These recommendations can be categorized as:

- 7 initial recommendations, developed in the early days of ACRE's work;
- 58 Phase I final recommendations, resulting from Phase I work;
- 108 supplemental recommendations, resulting from Phase I work;
- 12 supplemental transportation recommendations, resulting from the work of the ACRE Phase I Transportation Subcommittee; and
- 35 Phase II final recommendations.

The first of these two groups, chaired by Thad Trefiak, examined those ACRE recommendations that pertained directly to agriculture and transportation issues. All other recommendations were examined by the second working group, chaired by Deb Ehmann, and pertained to economic development issues.

recognized that many government initiatives and responses to ACRE recommendations are on-going and will not have an ending point. However, from ACRE's perspective, ACRE is satisfied that government has reviewed, is taking action and no longer needs to monitor these recommendations. A complete listing of all of the "Accepted" recommendations can be found in the appendices document under Appendix B.

“Works in Progress” are all recommendations that still require attention from the Government of Saskatchewan. The “Works in Progress” recommendations were then reviewed to identify those that were considered foundations for economic growth and were grouped into seven theme areas. The balance of the “Works in Progress”

recommendations were then allocated to a theme area to ensure that they were not lost and would continue to receive attention from government. Foundation recommendations can be found in the appendices document under Appendix A1. A listing of the remainder of the “Works in Progress” recommendations is attached to this document as Appendix A2 along with detailed information related to these recommendations. The theme areas are highlighted below:

Infrastructure: recommendations related to the physical and social infrastructure that serves Saskatchewan residents.

Immigration: recommendations related to Saskatchewan’s immigration policies and programs.

Taxation: recommendations supporting the financial stability and fair and equitable approaches to the provincial revenue.

Coordination and Skill Development: recommendations dealing with education, skills training, delivery of services, and collaboration among the three levels of government.

Business and Labour: recommendations that encourage a stronger business climate and better working relations in Saskatchewan.

Crown Land Use: recommendations addressing management and use of Crown lands in the province.

Value-Added Agriculture: recommendations to engage activities in Saskatchewan that add value to agricultural commodities.

3. Findings

Overall, the Monitoring Committee believes the Province of Saskatchewan has made significant progress toward the implementation of ACRE’s recommendations. Of the 220 recommendations, the Monitoring Committee classified almost two-thirds (143 recommendations, or 65 per cent) as “Accepted”. The Economic Development Working Group was especially satisfied, with members concluding that the provincial government’s response was considerable in some areas. One example the working group cited was the government’s action to implement ACRE’s recommendation that a venture capital fund be created that could be accessed first to leverage private capital. The Government of Saskatchewan met the spirit of the recommendation by creating the Saskatchewan Entrepreneurial Fund, a pool of government funds that can be used to leverage private funds and is managed by a non-government private sector firm.

Detailed outcomes of the Monitoring Committee’s work can be seen in the Appendices document under the sections A1, A2 and B. These appendices include each of the 220 recommendations, the province’s response to date (including supplemental information that the Committee requested during the examination process), and the Monitoring Committee’s classification of, and commentary relating to, each recommendation. Appendix A1 outlines information on the “Foundation” recommendations, Appendix A2 includes detailed information related to the other “Works in Progress” recommendations and Appendix B includes those recommendations deemed by the Monitoring Committee to be “Accepted”.



Agriculture and Transportation Working Group

This working group reviewed 103 of the 220 recommendations. The working group was satisfied with government actions to implement 75 of these recommendations and classified these 75 recommendations as “Accepted”.

These 75 recommendations include six recommendations that are not necessarily fully implemented by the Government of Saskatchewan, but have been forwarded by the Monitoring Committee to the Farm Support Review Committee (FSRC) for its consideration. The FSRC is a committee of experts in agriculture safety nets, appointed to provide the Minister of Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food with information and advice related to farm programming. The Monitoring Committee’s Agriculture and Transportation working group made this decision in recognition of the fact that the FSRC is in the best position to analyze and assess work in the areas.

Twenty eight of the recommendations this working group examined have been classified as “Works in Progress” and require further attention from the Government of Saskatchewan.

Economic Development Working Group

The Economic Development working group examined 117 of ACRE’s 220 recommendations. The working group found that 68 of the 117 recommendations have been implemented satisfactorily and classified them as “Accepted”. The remaining 49 recommendations have been classified as “Works in Progress” and require further attention from the government.

Economic Development Monitoring Working Group Members

- Deb Ehmann (Chair)
- Dennis Banda
- Colleen Bilokreli
- Joan Corneil
- Clay Dowling
- Guy Lonechild
- Les Lindberg
- Fay Myers
- Darell Pack
- Linda Pipke

Agriculture and Transportation Monitoring Working Group Members

- Thad Trefiak (Chair)
- Joan Chase
- Lester Lafond
- Keith Lewis
- Gordon Lightfoot
- John Serhienko
- David Sloan
- Brian Weedon
- Wanda Wolf

Specific Findings

In the case of many recommendations, the Monitoring Committee reviewed the information initially provided by the Government of Saskatchewan and requested more information about the province’s response. The Committee’s requests were generally fulfilled, resulting in Committee members having a better understanding of the situation.

Not all recommendations were accepted by government. Additional information was obtained, both through written submissions and in face to face meetings that resulted in a better understanding of the issues and options and frequently resolved the issue. Several recommendations, however, were not resolved in



this manner and the Monitoring Committee continues to feel that government must take action to address them. They include the following:

- The Monitoring Committee did not accept the government’s rejection of its recommendation that Saskatchewan Government Insurance (SGI) take more aggressive action to make insurance available to rural specialized and small businesses. After meeting with SGI and discussing the situation, the Monitoring Committee has classified this recommendation as a “Works in Progress”. SGI has agreed to discuss possibilities to address these issues with both the Insurance Brokers of Canada and the Insurance Brokers of Saskatchewan.

- The Monitoring Committee did not accept the government’s rejection of its recommendation that a program be developed to assist small communities with the energy costs of operating cultural and recreational facilities. Monitoring Committee members met with SaskPower to further discuss this issue and were pleased with the outcome of the meeting. SaskPower will look at ways that relief could be provided to rural communities. This recommendation has been re-classified as a “Works in Progress”.

In its early deliberations, ACRE developed recommendations related to the delivery of emergency services, such as fire protection and ambulance assistance, in remote and isolated areas of the province. While the province has technically implemented the relevant recommendation as worded by ACRE, the Monitoring Committee believes there is more work to be done in this area. Some remote rural areas of the province are still not served by adequate emergency services. The Monitoring Committee believes that ACRE must continue to monitor the province’s work in this area.

ACRE recognizes the importance of recommendations related to the grains and oilseed sector and the overall impact on the agricultural environment. The Monitoring Committee will continue to monitor these complex value-added recommendations.

4. Foundations for Economic Growth

A full listing of the 77 recommendations that the Monitoring Committee has classified as “Works in Progress” is shown in Appendices A1 and A2. Of these 77 recommendations, the ACRE Monitoring Committee has classified outstanding recommendations into seven theme areas.

Infrastructure

In Phase II, ACRE’s Rural Infrastructure Subcommittee recommended that the Province of Saskatchewan promote and support a regional approach to infrastructure development. While some action has been taken in this area, there is still much to be done. ACRE continues to believe that this recommendation is vitally important. Saskatchewan must serve the needs of a sparse population with limited resources. If the infrastructure that rural residents need to live and do business is coordinated on a regional bases, duplication and overlap can be reduced or eliminated, public finances can be used optimally, and all rural residents can still be assured of having reasonable access to essential infrastructure.

“Saskatchewan has led the country to cover its territory and offers broadband services to every community over 200 people”—Seaboard Group (Regarding Internet Services in the province)

Outstanding Recommendations related to Infrastructure	Identification Number
Apply a consistent set of regulations for the use of rural municipal roads.	F11
Implement policies that encourage aboriginal partnerships in the private and public sector.	F19
Develop a plan for infrastructure built around key irrigation sites.	F31
Work with municipal governments to develop and implement an integrated road, rail and air services strategy.	F33
Adopt policy that allows expansion of the current irrigation system.	F36
Develop an integrated approval business process to assist businesses from project conception to the start up of the enterprise.	P07
Mandate SGI to develop partnerships and policies that provide insurance packages to rural business.	P08
Incorporate into land use policies recognition of land holder's existing rights.	P15
Support a regional approach to infrastructure development.	P18
Implement enforcement measures to support the weight hauling audit program.	S57
Conduct random weigh bill audits on all industries moving product by truck.	S58
Work with the private sector through co-operation and coordination to develop an economic development strategy and rural infrastructure strategy.	P19
Establish, maintain and deliver a complete, accurate and current ecological and geological information database to industry.	S24
Provide a comprehensive, multi-discipline, single-source database of information on soil, water supply, transportation infrastructure, incentives, local government structure, land ownership and taxation to governments, businesses and organizations.	S27

Outstanding Recommendations related to Infrastructure	Identification Number
Review the approval processes for zoning, planning and development, water and sewage.	S28
Work with municipalities, REDAs and Community Futures to improve integration of agriculture, economic and rural development.	S29
Establish an integrated transportation corridor system.	S51
Ensure an integrated development of the transportation system.	S53
Educate the public on the highway system, construction, overweight regulations and costs.	S59
Conduct a review of the current and future railway rights-of-way and rail line removal process.	S74
Educate the public on importance of weight compliance and safety issues.	S76
Develop an Internet based central cataloguing system of available Sask Housing units.	S80
Establish a program to assist small communities with the energy costs of operating cultural and recreational facilities.	S81
Expand existing community pastures or co-operatives through public, private and corporate partnerships.	S95
Sustain a north/south international trade corridor system.	T01
Update policies governing design/inspection of municipal roads.	T03
Review existing population criteria policy for highway maintenance.	T12
Develop a trucking method and axle system to maximize the use of containers.	S68

Immigration

Since ACRE’s inception, committee members have recognized the importance of immigration to replace rural Saskatchewan’s declining population and ensure that workers are available to fill jobs in rural Saskatchewan in the future. ACRE recommended that the province:

- substantially expand existing immigration programs (the Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program and the Migrant Workers’ Program) in response to identified skill and worker shortages; and
- aggressively examine the barriers faced by immigrants, and promote immigration programs to employers and potential immigrants.

ACRE members recognize that Saskatchewan

faces significant challenges in attracting immigrants to the province, especially to rural areas. However, attracting and retaining immigrants is vitally important and these obstacles must be overcome.

While the province has committed significant funding in response to this recommendation, more action is required. Additional government staff and funding for programs and organizations that support immigrants and promote immigration, especially to rural areas, must be put into place.

The Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program (SINP) continues to grow. For example, entrepreneur, skilled worker and Health profession categories have been expanded.

Following the changes in 2002 to the farm ownership rules under “The Saskatchewan Farm Security Act” there have been a considerable number of farmers and ranchers moving here from other jurisdictions. An example: farmers are moving from Alberta to the Yorkton area through an immigration project called the “Last Cattle Frontier”.

Outstanding Recommendations related to Immigration	Identification Number
Substantially expand the existing programs (Saskatchewan Immigrant Nominee Program and Migrant Workers’ Program) in response to identified skill and worker shortages.	P32
Aggressively examine the barriers faced by immigrants, and promote immigration programs to employers and potential immigrants.	P33
Enhance support mechanisms for immigrants, such as cultural, language, foreign credentials and settlement funding.	P34
Examine barriers faced by immigrants, and promote immigration programs to employers.	P35
Promote immigration of families and extended families and eliminate obstacles for professions such as nurses and teachers.	S47

Taxation

In Phase I, ACRE recommended that the Province of Saskatchewan reduce its reliance on property taxes to fund the education system by increasing provincial funding, and complete the ongoing major review of the Foundation Operating Grant.

While the province’s March 3, 2006, announcement of an additional \$52.8 million per year in education property tax relief on agriculture land begins to work toward this goal (and establishes, on average, a 60/40 provincial/local education tax split), there is more work to be done. Education property taxes are regressive taxes that bear no relation to the income earned by farmers and other rural business owners. Business owners whose income fluctuates from year to year have

difficulty remaining competitive in the face of high education property taxes.

Continuing provincial efforts are required to improve the education property tax system and improve transparency and equitability.

Saskatchewan has introduced reductions to provincial business taxes (phased in elimination of Corporate Capital Tax, reduction of Corporate Income Tax and making the Investment Tax Credit for Manufacturing and Processing refundable) that will benefit rural Saskatchewan.

Outstanding Recommendations related to Taxation	Identification Number
Ensure consistency of taxation in all rural municipalities.	F03
Reduce 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.	F06
Implement a consumer tax to fund tourism products and marketing.	F09
Implement a taxation/assistance program to support transfer of land inter-generationally.	F10
Implement a Saskatchewan Equity Investment Tax Deferral Program.	P02
Ensure fair competition with other provinces by developing a PST exemption program, systematic elimination of Corporate Capital Tax and reduction of Corporate Income Tax.	P06
Establish an apprenticeship training tax credit.	P23

Co-ordination and Skills Development

When members of ACRE’s Phase II Business Development subcommittee began to examine programs available to rural entrepreneurs, subcommittee members were surprised to find that, rather than not enough programs and services, there were in fact too many. The three levels of government offer a veritable maze of programs and services for economic development, making it difficult for entrepreneurs and community leaders to find and access the most appropriate source of support. The sheer volume of available programs results in funding and staff spread thinly across many programs. The system could be more effective if human and financial resources were concentrated on a much smaller number of accessible, effective programs.

In response to this, ACRE has recommended that the province work with the Government of Canada and with Saskatchewan Municipal Governments 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

There have been increases in funding to Career-Start. This includes increased capacity in JobStart/Future Skills, additional capacity for adult basic education and apprenticeship training.

aim of eliminating the overlapping mandates and jurisdictions and of improving the effectiveness of that delivery system.

The province has not yet taken adequate action on this file. It is important that this work take place as quickly as possible. Entrepreneurs and community leaders need strong, readily available programs to build their businesses and communities. A discussion among political representatives from all three levels of government (federal, provincial, and municipal) would be a good beginning to implementing this recommendation.

The Training System Review Panel, appointed in May 2005, and chaired by Douglas McArthur, undertook a comprehensive review of Saskatchewan’s training and apprenticeship system.

Mr. McArthur indicates “Our report emphasizes the need to adopt a new training model that is flexible and adaptable, responsive to learners’ needs and circumstances, and community based.

Outstanding Recommendations related to Coordination and Skills Development	Identification Number
Provide safety and environmental ag-industry policies and practices consistent with other jurisdictions.	F12
Share the provincial vision with Aboriginal people at all levels.	F17
Initiate the removal of barriers to provincial programs that prevent First Nation participation.	F21
Promote careers in the trades.	F23
Engage the appropriate departments/organizations to develop and implement a curriculum based component on business ownership/entrepreneurship for the educational system.	F27
<p>Work with the Government of Canada, and with municipal governments in Saskatchewan, to create a Task Force that will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	P01
Provide resources needed to establish strong governance systems by building an effective network of leaders and mentors and disseminating information to community boards and entrepreneurs.	P04
Provide financial support and encourage the Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission to expand its efforts to recruit and train Aboriginal apprentices.	P24
Create a trade job bank.	P25
Increase flexibility in compulsory training ratios related to apprenticeship certification for rural and small businesses.	P26
Support an increase in delivery of in-community education and training by using existing systems such as SIAST, Regional Colleges, Universities and others.	P28
Match municipal funding for emergency and fire protection equipment, training, telecommunication systems and Global Positioning Services.	S33
Implement a program that allows people to build entrepreneurial, leadership and management skills.	S34
Develop and implement a rural air service access strategy.	S62

Business and Labour

In its initial phase of research, ACRE recommended that the Government of Saskatchewan, in conjunction with the private sector, develop a provincial economic development strategy, and a supportive rural infra-

BizPal (a federal, provincial, and municipal program) provides a one-stop, interactive site for business permit and license information from each level of government. A number of rural communities are considering setting up this simplified service.



structure strategy, while ensuring a high level of co-ordination and co-operation among and within provincial government departments and Crown corporations for the implementation of these strategies. The Monitoring Committee does not believe enough work has been done to implement this recommendation.

To help Saskatchewan’s business and labour communities communicate more effectively, both in rural and urban Saskatchewan, ACRE has recommended that the province establish a

Labour-Business Council which would focus on private sector labour issues. This Council would provide a mechanism for labour and business to meet together in an environment that would foster dialogue, allowing representatives to develop mutual respect and to define areas of agreement. ACRE understands that the Province of Saskatchewan has faced obstacles in attempting to implement this recommendation, but this issue is still important to ACRE, and to the labour and business communities. It is important that government implement this recommendation.

Outstanding Recommendations related to Business and Labour	Identification Number
Provide industry-wide policies that support food safety and environmental practices.	F12
Collaborate with labour and industry to review and establish labour efficiencies.	F13
Engage Aboriginal people in business ownership and work force opportunities.	F18
Provide opportunities for businesses to assess and build entrepreneurial, leadership and management skills.	F24
In conjunction with the private sector, develop a provincial economic development strategy, and a supportive rural infrastructure strategy, while ensuring a high level of co-ordination and co-operation among and within provincial government departments and Crown corporations for the implementation of these strategies.	P19
<p>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.</p> <p>The council would be made up of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Six representatives recommended by the Saskatchewan Chamber of Commerce, who would then appoint a co-chair; b) Six representatives recommended by the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, who would then appoint a co-chair; and c) Secretariat: Labour, and Industry and Resources. The committee would report to these ministers. <p>Functions would include an evaluation of the manner in which the legislation is functioning, the identification of problems and recommendations for legislative amendments.</p> <p>It is important that each organization be allowed to assign representatives without obtaining consensus from government or from the other party.</p>	P20
Continue ongoing identification of employment skill needs and labour shortages.	P33
Develop a program that helps build entrepreneurial, leadership and management skills.	S34
Develop a labour strategy.	S37



Crown Land Use

The province, through its various departments and agencies, owns a significant amount of land in the province. The administration of Crown land is very challenging as citizens of the province have differing views on how this land should be used. As a result of these differing views, conflicts sometime develop over how the land should be managed by the province.

ACRE identified that addressing existing obligations regarding Treaty Land Entitlements is important. Based on a “willing seller—willing buyer” basis some 178,000 acres of Crown agricultural land has been sold to First Nation signatories of the Treaty Land Entitlement Agreement.

During the ACRE process, Crown land was an on-going issue with many ACRE members. As a result, a sub-committee was formed specifically to examine the future of Crown land ownership in the province and how Crown land could be used to facilitate economic activity in rural Saskatchewan. As a result of the sub-committee’s findings, ACRE believes that the management and future direction for Crown lands is an important area that the province needs to address. The following recommendations speak to the many issues surrounding the future direction of Crown lands in the province.

Outstanding Recommendations related to Crown Land	Identification Number
Establish legislative, regulatory and policy frameworks that encourage sustainable non-traditional and multi-use of Crown land.	F38
Work with Municipal Government to develop a land use planning process.	F39
Use Crown land as a tool to enhance the livestock industry.	F47
Develop criteria for Crown land management.	P10
Review non-committed Crown land usage and consider realistic options.	P11
Promote non-traditional land uses, being cognizant of all stakeholders’ needs.	P12
Strengthen regulations governing land usage to protect against ecological damage.	P13
Develop resource management planning standards to support regional and local planning exercises.	P14
Incorporate existing land obligations into land use policies and communicate with lease holders.	P15
Review and revise the <i>Provincial Lands Act</i> and its regulations.	P17



Value-added Agriculture

Over many years, Saskatchewan producers and the province have had the goal of increasing the value of agricultural commodities before they leave the province. Much of the province's agricultural production leaves the province in its raw, unprocessed form. Adding value to these unprocessed commodities would create economic activity and increase employment. In addition, increasing the value-added content of Saskatchewan's agricultural products could increase the incomes of producers if producers were able to have an ownership stake as these products moved up through the value chain. Saskatchewan is not alone in trying to add value to their commodities as there are many other jurisdictions in North America following the same path.

Given ACRE's mandate to further develop Saskatchewan's rural economy, adding value to Saskatchewan's agricultural commodities was seen by ACRE members as one of the key economic drivers for rural Saskatchewan. As a result, a number of recommendations were

developed by ACRE around the theme of adding value to Saskatchewan's agricultural production.

As producers and the province increase added-value activity in Saskatchewan, the province must be strategic in its approach, especially in the face of low-cost competition from other countries such as Brazil in ethanol and with regards to the high subsidies given to farmers and industries in countries such as the United States. As the province and producers move forward, we need to keep in mind that in many value-added markets (especially in mature industries such as meat processing) there are large and powerful players that have a large presence in the marketplace. This means that developing these new value-added industries will be no small task.

Saskatchewan was the first Canadian jurisdiction to mandate the use of ethanol. In the fall of 2006, there will be three ethanol production facilities in operation in Saskatchewan.

Outstanding Recommendations related to Value-Added	Identification Number
Establish a Venture Management Initiative.	F30
Support the development of the ethanol and biofuel industry and align Saskatchewan with other provinces in Canada.	I07
Facilitate initiatives that improve liquidity of investments in community projects and businesses.	P05
Implement the Saskatchewan Works fund as a source of capital investment.	P09
Develop and implement a strategy to research production technologies and the skills required to deliver results.	S06
Lead an Agri-business Investment Strategy to entice entrepreneurs, agri-business, partners and capital into targeted sectors.	S18
Encourage processing of horticultural crops.	S48
Support marketing initiatives and processing of specialized livestock.	S90
Investigate opportunities for the Grain and Oilseed sectors.	S93



5. Next Steps

While the work that was required to develop this report was important for ACRE, ACRE's role in monitoring the progress of recommendations is not yet finished. The ACRE Monitoring Committee recommends that members of ACRE's next phase continue to monitor the province's progress in implementing those 77 recommendations that have been classified as "Works in Progress".

However, the 143 recommendations that have been classified as "Accepted" can now be considered complete. Unless there are significant changes to government policies and programming, these recommendations will not receive future scrutiny from ACRE.

Over the past year, the province has provided ACRE with a bi-annual update describing actions that have been taken with respect to each of ACRE's 220 recommendations. The Monitoring Committee recommends that the province continue to provide updates on progress made in implementing the 77 "Works in Progress" recommendations.



6. Conclusion

ACRE's 220 recommendations are quite diverse, covering a large range of topics and spanning a period of approximately three years from March 2002 to May 2005. In reviewing these recommendations, the Monitoring Committee realized that the specific wording chosen for each recommendation had a significant impact on the assumed intent and ultimate impact of each recommendation.

When the Monitoring Committee began the process of reviewing progress on ACRE's recommendations, the task of assessing each of 220 recommendations and analyzing all the changes that the Government of Saskatchewan

has made to policies and programs since ACRE's inception seemed overwhelming. However, as a result of the professionalism and efficiencies of committee members and the dedicated support the committee received from provincial government staff, the task was accomplished without complications.

Throughout the review process, the committee was impressed by the good intentions and hard work demonstrated by the people of Saskatchewan and the Government of Saskatchewan. People from across Saskatchewan are pulling together to develop a vital rural economy in this province. The progress that has been made in implementing ACRE's recommendations demonstrates that we can work together to accomplish our objectives and build a strong future in rural Saskatchewan.



Related Documents:

**Appendix A1
“Works in Progress” Recommendations - Foundation**

**Appendix A2
“Works in Progress” Recommendations - Not including Foundation**

**Appendix B
“Accepted” Recommendations**

To view these documents online. visit
www.recd.gov.sk.ca/acre