



ACTION COMMITTEE ON THE RURAL ECONOMY

**ACRE Youth Forum Summary Report
March 14, 2002**

February 15th to 17th, 2002
Saskatoon Inn
Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I:	PREAMBLE	1
II:	THE FORUM	1
III:	THE SESSIONS	2
IV:	RECOMMENDATIONS	3
V:	GOING FORWARD	6
VI:	APPENDICES	7
	APPENDIX 1 - Steering Committee list	7
	APPENDIX 2 - Map representation of participants	8
	APPENDIX 3 - Agenda	9
	APPENDIX 4 - Breakout Questions	10
	APPENDIX 5 - Questions and Answers	11

I: PREAMBLE

The Youth Steering Committee of ACRE accepted an exciting challenge: to address rural revitalization in Saskatchewan from a young adult's perspective. It was tasked that this challenge could be met by posing the question, What Would It Take? to young rural Saskatchewan citizens between the ages of 17 and 32. The group wanted to know what would it take to keep rural Saskatchewan alive, and more specifically what would it take to not only retain, but also attract young adults to the rural areas of our province. The Youth ACRE Committee knows that their province has a wealth of untapped resources and it became our mission to draw a road map to an ideal Saskatchewan.

The first step came in forming a steering committee that would head the forum (see Appendix A). The committee met a number of times before the concept of a rural forum was finalized. Through the collection of submissions from around the province, a list of potential delegates was created. The ultimate goal was equal representation geographically as well as from different industries. The list also included students and Aboriginal representation.

The main objective of the forum was obvious - not only did the steering committee want to solicit the input that would cultivate innovative ideas and produce concrete recommendations to pass on to ACRE as a whole, but there were other opportunities to be realized at this forum. The unique opportunity of having the brightest and the best of our Saskatchewan youth together provided the opportunity to motivate each other and build networks that would ideally result in a strong link for youth throughout the province.

The anticipated outcome of the forum was two fold; to collect opinions and ideas about rural Saskatchewan, and to review and critique the ACRE's final recommendations. This report, although qualitative, provides ideas and recommendations for the future of rural Saskatchewan from a youth perspective.

II: The Forum

The Steering Committee strived to ensure equal representation from all geographical areas of the province. A Saskatchewan map displaying the hometowns of the participants is included in Appendix B. Sex, background, education, industry and Aboriginal representation were also considered when selecting participants. In total 143 candidates were invited and 60 participated in the forum.

A copy of the agenda is found in Appendix C. Aside from the breakout discussions, the Honourable Clay Serby, Minister of Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food, joined the group in the opening the session to bring greetings on behalf of the Provincial government and the group had an opportunity to ask questions of Minister Serby after his presentation. As well, the Action Committee on the Rural Economy (ACRE) Executive Committee was present on Day two, to discuss the ACRE process and the interim recommendations. The agenda also included a motivational speaker who talked about his challenges as an adventurer and how they relate to risk taking in Rural Saskatchewan.

III: The Sessions

The committee used breakout sessions as the main vehicle to collect info at the forum. The sessions were designed to collect input from the participants in an unbiased, dialogued method. Each session was lead by a facilitator from the Youth ACRE Steering Committee and information was recorded in the group memory via flip chart and laptop.

The participants were divided into breakout groups based on regional location and industry affiliation. Each group had individuals who could offer information on the questions and objectives for each breakout session. Directly, many commonalities and connections were noted in each session and indirectly a better understanding amongst sectors, regions, and cultures was also recognized. In total, three breakout sessions were held. The main topics were as follows:

1. Opportunities and constraints in the five economic sectors as identified by ACRE (agriculture, agri-value, rural manufacturing and construction, rural service, and resource).
2. Opportunities and constraints with respect to social issues such as health care, education, and infrastructure.
3. Issues around entrepreneurship; access to capital; labour force skill/expertise; regulation and policy.

A detailed list of breakout sessions and questions is included in Appendix D.

The final session was a panel discussion with members of ACRE. The youth forum participants had the opportunity to read the ACRE recommendations and view the Reporting Back video, before the floor was opened for questions or comments. A summary of this discussion is included in Appendix E of this report.

The audience microphones had a line up of six to eight people at any time and over a dozen questions were asked in total. The majority of questions and comments were positive, indicating support for ACRE's recommendations and process. Concerns were limited to two areas:

1. There is not enough youth involvement both in the ACRE process and in government decision making in general.
2. How will ACRE monitor with the recommendations to ensure that the government is following through with the process?

Overall, participants were pleased that they could be a part of the ACRE Youth process and applauded ACRE's efforts.

IV: Recommendations

Recommendations centred on a number of themes. The message was clear that youth, who are living in rural Saskatchewan, are very dedicated to the future of their community, and are willing to help out in any way they can. Although many of the participants at the forum will move because of career opportunities, if they had the same choices in rural Saskatchewan they would stay.

Overall participants see Saskatchewan as a great place to raise a family, providing a very high quality of life. However, they understand that in order to retain youth, especially in rural areas, there must be jobs, including high-level jobs for people who are well educated. The group knows that these jobs can be created in three main ways; expansion of existing companies, new company start ups by local entrepreneurs, and attraction of companies from outside of Saskatchewan. The forum participants did not necessarily feel that Saskatchewan currently is as business friendly as it could be. Suggestions for change fall under a number of categories:

Investment

Many participants suggested that both existing businesses and new entrepreneurs need better access to capital. There is no consensus on whether or not the Provincial Government should be more or less involved in this, but a number of policy changes were suggested.

- Increase the amount of capital available to youth. The programs that offer loans or grants under \$5000 provide little support for youth who are interested in getting into business.
- Reduce the number of programs offered by government by eliminating overlap and combining similar programs.
- There is a lot of “untouchable” money in the province that could help build Saskatchewan’s economy. Government should encourage more local contribution to private industry through incentives such as tax breaks for investing in Saskatchewan companies or increase the RRSP contribution towards funds, such as the Golden

Opportunities Fund, that invest in local companies.

- Many of the participants were in favour of what Crown Investment Corporation and Saskatchewan Opportunities Corporation were providing for investment capital. Some participants did note that these organizations do not take as much risk as they should on viable projects.
- * • Government should be partnering with the First Nations bands to promote economic development partnerships. Treaty Land Entitlement money could be used to fund Saskatchewan’s economic opportunities.
- More capital in the agriculture sector is needed to support viable projects. Many participants noted that they would like to see increased amounts of capital available for agriculture projects that would traditionally be considered high risk.

Overall, the participants realized that companies and investments from outside the province are needed.

Economic Development

The Provincial Government should promote Saskatchewan as “Open for Business” and mean it. Many policy changes that may improve the business climate (or poor perceptions of it) were suggested at the forum. They include:

- Government should support private industry, but not be directly involved in it. Although not everyone agreed with the latter part of this statement, the beginning is an obvious comment.
- Both corporate and personal provincial taxes should be lowered. This will help business to succeed and individuals to prosper.
- There was discussion on promotion of for profit community projects. One participant noted that most towns work very hard to get a town hall or a swimming pool, but there is little community focus on for profit projects. As another participant commented “your town is not defined

by a school or a hospital - why don't we put this energy into business in the community- this is what really gets a community going".

- Tourism was mentioned multiple times as an area of opportunity for Saskatchewan. Taking advantage of the tourism potential in the province could generate capital for the province as well as help Saskatchewanians to appreciate their province's natural resources.
- One of the breakout groups also addressed co-operatives and community-based projects. Although these are seen as playing an important role in the rural economy, the group felt that these structures were not the only answer, but part of the transition process towards private industry and a stimulator of spinoff companies.
- The oil and gas industry was mentioned a number of times during discussion about Saskatchewan's opportunities. Many participants felt that the time to lower the royalties on these resources is now. If the province waits too long, the opportunity may be lost.
- Regina and Saskatoon provide access to a number of world-class clusters that include research and development institutions as well as private industry. These facilities should be centralized in the cities, but are important in identifying markets and developing agriculture innovations for the rural areas. An example of a cluster includes agriculture biotechnology in Saskatoon.
- A couple of participants noted that the Kyoto Agreement should be further explored as an avenue to become the "Green Leader" in Canada.
- Many of the discussions relating to industry ended with the solution of actively attracting more companies to the province that would be complimentary to existing organizations. The communities should use their regional benefits to build on business clusters that may already exist.
- The participants felt that the Internet is going to be a huge tool for the rural areas in the future. They applauded the government's efforts to bring technology to the rural communities and noted that many businesses could compete worldwide from small town Saskatchewan over the Internet.

Agriculture

Agriculture was a major theme of the forum because of its importance in the rural economy. Rather than completely changing the focus of the rural economy, the participants noted that a few changes would make a noticeable difference.

- Saskatchewan farmers have traditionally had the mentality that they are producing food to feed the world. This must change to a more business-oriented way of thinking and a focus on non-food products such as ethanol and fibreboard, for example.
- The rest of the world sees Saskatchewan as being pure and natural, which positions the province perfectly for organic production. Saskatchewan's agriculture products need to have a strong branding strategy to help market them internationally. A model for this program would be Alberta's beef branding program.
- Young farmers are concerned about the transition process of farms from owners wishing to retire to youth who would like to enter into farming. Farming is a very costly business to get involved in and the government should look at ways to facilitate the transition process.
- Participants were concerned about the use of land by farmers and other organizations. The provincial government should be promoting production of different crops in the areas where they grow best and should not be promoting mass production of one product.
- The group knows that Saskatchewan has access to all of the inputs needed for intensive livestock production (land, water, feed), but there was no consensus on whether or not Saskatchewan should be promoting the growth of intensive livestock operations and large corporation involvement in the rural areas. One of the ideas is to have a number of small plants feed a large plant. For example, Saskatchewan could have a number of ethanol plants that could be fed by small farms in the area. These farmers could then use the byproduct from the plant for their feedlots.

- All participants were in favour of provincial government promoting value added processing by funding value added companies or attracting companies that would compliment current production.

Infrastructure and Rural Services

- Many participants have indicated interest in a two-tiered health care system. If Saskatchewan citizens have the choice to wait for healthcare in the public system or pay for quicker service, it would benefit the healthcare system in two ways. First it would allow those people who did want to pay for quicker service to do so. Secondly, it would free up the service for others on the waiting list.
- Implementation of a user fee in the healthcare system was discussed as an option for Saskatchewan. Even though the fee could be very minimal, it would prevent citizens from abusing the system.
- Nursing homes in rural areas should be explored to create higher paying jobs and to keep more people in the rural communities.
- The discussion on transportation did not provide one direction for recommendations, but did comment on exploration of railway deregulation, need for increased air services, and more regulation for semi-trailer use on highways.

Attitude / Facilitating Change

Many of the issues that we are facing in Saskatchewan may relate back to a negative attitude towards the province and opportunities here.

- The forum participants applauded marketing initiatives inside the province such as The Saskatchewan Dream and Seeds of Success, but noted that people living in the province already know that Saskatchewan is a great place to live. Steps should be taken to promote Saskatchewan outside of the province through both competitive advertising and working with the media to produce good news stories.

- The group strongly supported more Aboriginal information about heritage and culture being transferred to the general populous in the province as the cultural population grows. This applies to all areas but particularly agriculture, education and health care.

- The participants believe that we must encourage a successful attitude by ensuring competition and encouraging Saskatchewan people to be success in this province. Encourage a positive outlook to opportunity and change the mentality of learned helplessness. Explore ways to support community investment in local businesses and increase community pride.

Skill Development

- The group felt that educating Aboriginal people should be one of the provincial government's high priorities. The Aboriginal population will be Saskatchewan's competitive advantage in the near future.
- The provincial government should explore ways in which we may include more "Saskatchewan" into our education system - to help tie people to their roots. This includes history, government policy, general information on resources, and opportunities available. Ensure that even as children we are learning a positive image of the province.
- Practical courses such as entrepreneurship and business should be offered in the rural education system at all levels. The participants commented a number of times on the importance of the business community being involved in schools in both program development and mentorship.
- The group sees tremendous opportunity for online education (at the primary and secondary levels as well as the post secondary level) that has the potential to provide rural Saskatchewan residents with a more balanced education system.
- Promotion of the trades is viewed as a top priority. The graduates coming out of technical and trade schools are needed to fill labour force gaps and accredited trades people should be promoted as a valuable resource.

V: Going Forward

The Youth Steering Committee and participants both indicated interest in seeing discussions about rural Saskatchewan continue. Many participants would like to see increased participation of youth in policy development and government process as well as to continue the networking that occurred at this forum. A number of suggestions for going forward have been made, these include:

- **Web site** - A web based application would be the easiest and most cost effective way to continue these discussions. There are opportunities to create an on-line chat room where policy, regulation, opportunity, etc. could be discussed. This site could host other resources such as ACRE updates and government policy information as well as solicit information from the forum participants and rural youth in Saskatchewan. Almost all of the forum participants indicate that they use e-mail on a regular basis and would therefore have access to the Internet.
- **Annual Youth Forum** - In order to ensure youth perspective in policy and to continue these discussions, a yearly forum could be hosted. This could be either independent or government assisted much like the youth forum. The purpose could be to direct government on various policy or issues or to solicit youth perspective on certain topics. A number of participants noted that this option would be of interest to them.
- **Youth ACRE Sub-Committee** - The Steering Committee realizes that its focus will need to shift from steering the forum to putting recommendations into action. The committee may need to expand or add certain participants from groups that currently are not well represented. This smaller group in its new form could be used as first line respondent to various issues from a youth perspective or to meet with government for input and would become a liaison between the youth of Saskatchewan and the provincial government.

- **Special Projects Group** - Smaller groups made up of Youth ACRE participants could be set up in order to accomplish specific projects or tasks. Although the group does not yet have a strong direction for these special projects, many participants have shown interest.
- **Aboriginal Involvement** - Many participants would like to hold another forum that is specifically focused on Aboriginal participation in economic development and in the community.

The committee is unsure what method will be used to continue the discussion with youth in Saskatchewan, but the strong concern about follow up from the participants reinforces the need to explore these alternatives.

APPENDIX 1

Youth Action Committee on the Rural Economy

Committee Members

Danea Armstrong
Chair
Ph: (306) 664-0728
Darmstrong@sreda.com

Jamie Corfield
Ph: (306) 978-4180 (Saskatoon)
(306) 446-0067 (North B.)
corfield_j@hotmail.com

Mark Ferguson
Ph: (306) 949-6515 (Regina)
(306) 242-4550 (S'toon)
maf083@mail.usask.ca

Deanne Kasokeo
Ph: (306) 382-6109 (Home)
(306) 966-7173 (Work)
d.kasokeo@home.com

Krista Ivey
Ph: (403) 381-6567 (Home)
(403) 329-4462 (Ext 331 - Work)
krista_Ivey@cargill.com

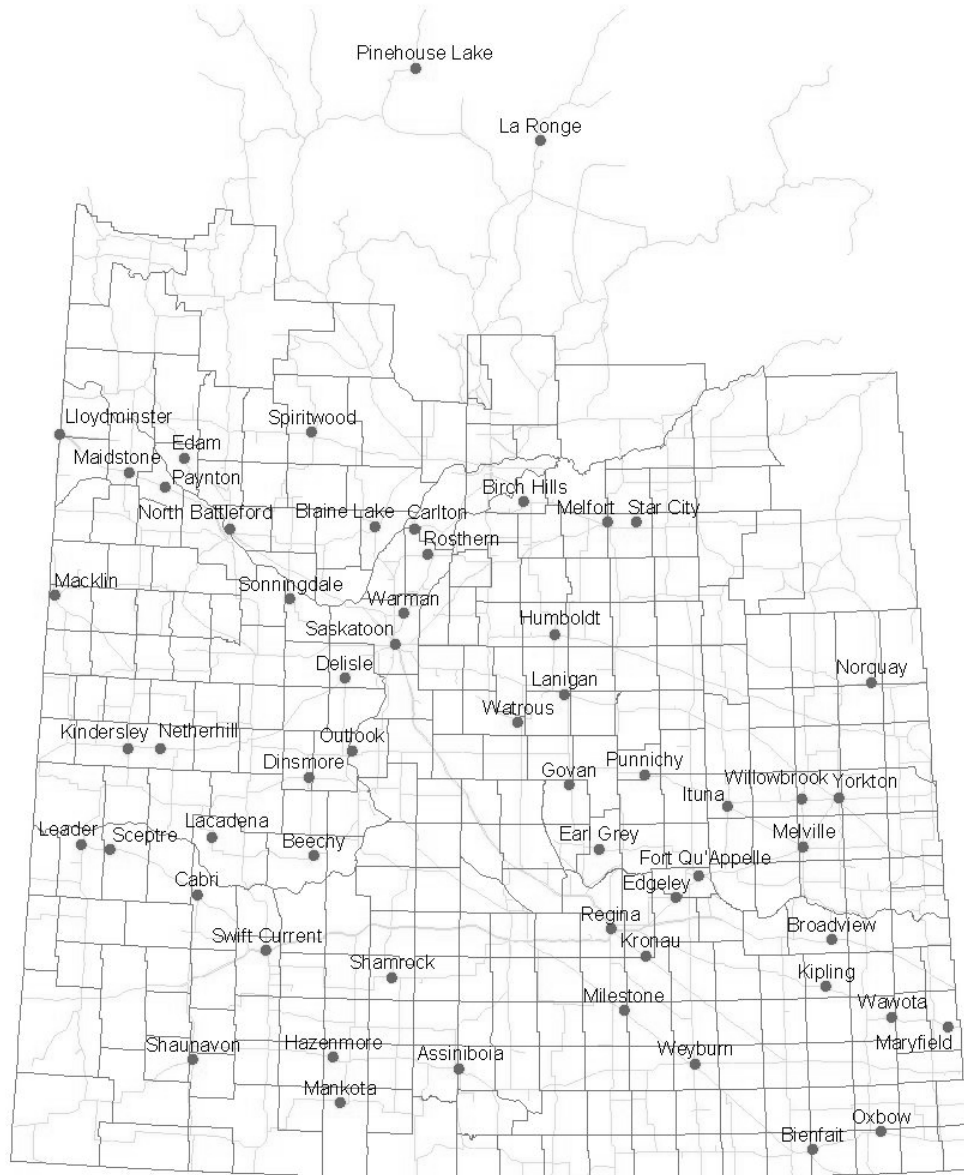
Kim Lock
Ph: (306) 753-2229
(306) 978-0815
kml691@hotmail.com


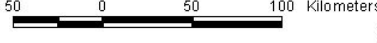

Jason Wildeboer
Ph: (306) 249-4358 (H)
(306) 249-2382 (W)
skunkhollow@sk.sympatico.ca

Sarah Story
Ph: (306) 664-4104
sestory@canoemail.com

APPENDIX 2

ACRE - Youth Forum Participants



 Saskatchewan Agriculture and Food	 50 0 50 100 Kilometers	 N	Prepared By: Geomatics Unit
	UTM Zone 13 Projection NAD 83		Data Source: Administrative Services
			Date: March 14, 2002

©2002 Government of Saskatchewan

APPENDIX 3

**Action Committee on the Rural Economy (ACRE)
Youth Forum
February 15th to February 17th, 2002
Saskatoon Inn - Saskatoon, Saskatchewan
Forum Agenda**

Friday February 15th

7:00 pm - 10:00 pm Registration and Welcome Social - Courtyard Room

Saturday February 16th

8:00 am Registration and Breakfast - Canadian Room

9:00 am Welcome and Introductions

- Ms. Danae Armstrong, Chair, ACRE Youth Forum Steering Committee
- Honourable Clay Serby, Deputy Premier Minister of Agriculture and Food Minister Responsible for the Rural Revitalization Office
- Ms. Audrey Horkoff, Co-Chair Action Committee on the Rural Economy (ACRE)

9:30 am Overview of Agenda and Expected Outcomes of the Forum

10:00 am Presentation and Discussion of Youth Forum Vision/Mandate

10:30 am

COFFEE

10:45 am

BREAK OUT SESSION #1

- Discussion: The Rural Economy*
- Agriculture
 - Agri-Value
 - Rural Manufacturing and Construction
 - Rural Service Sector
 - Resource Sector

12:00 pm Lunch - Canadian Room

1:00 pm **BREAK OUT SESSION #2**

- Discussion: Social Issues*
- Healthcare
 - Education
 - Infrastructure

2:15 pm

COFFEE

2:45 pm **BREAK OUT SESSION #3**

- Discussion: General Topics For Discussion*
- entrepreneurship
 - access to capital
 - labour force skill/expertise
 - regulation/policy

4:00 pm Recap and Intro to Sunday

4:30 pm Adjourn Meeting

6:00 pm Cocktails - Canadian Room

6:30 pm Dinner/Banquet (Business Attire) - Canadian Room

7:00 pm Entertainment

Sunday February 17th

7:30 am Breakfast

8:30 am Key Note Speaker - Bruce Kirkby

9:30 am Coffee Break

10:00 am ACRE Presentation - Reporting Back To Rural Saskatchewan
• ACRE Executive Committee

Question and Answer Period

11:45 am Forum Wrap Up

12:00 pm Lunch

APPENDIX 4

Breakout Questions

This is the question guide used by the facilitators for each session:

Breakout Session #1

- List the opportunities/ strengths that are available in each sector that need to be maximized.
- Discuss the constraints that must be overcome in order to enhance the opportunities for sustainable rural economic development?

Breakout Session #2

- What do you see as current strengths in our:
 - a: Health Care
 - b: Education
 - c: Infrastructure
- Given the current population and economic situation in our communities in rural Saskatchewan what innovative and successful ideas need to be addressed in order to sustain our rural development and communities.
- What do you see Health Care, Education, and our Infrastructure in Saskatchewan to look like in 10 to 15 years and what policies and procedures need to be in place to support these views?

Breakout Session #3

1. List and discuss innovative and successful ideas that have been implemented by entrepreneurs locally and around the world used to maximize rural economic growth.
2. Is there access to expand and start ventures in Saskatchewan (Access to capital) and what are the opportunities; how do you find them?
3. Discuss the Saskatchewan talent base in relation to labour force skill and expertise. What can Saskatchewan do capitalize on this?
4. What can be done to ensure these issues we have discussed address another issue — retention of our Saskatchewan Youth?

APPENDIX 5

ACRE Committee Panel

Question and Answer Session

Q: Are we going to look at things other than an agriculture perspective? Are we going to develop other drivers in other industries in other markets etc?

A: We have looked at other industries unrelated to agriculture (tourism etc) - although we do focus somewhat on agriculture. We are looking at things like web development through communications infrastructure (high speed Internet access) - things outside the traditional Saskatchewan rural agricultural businesses. Access to air transportation is also being looked at so that the big high tech companies may come into Saskatchewan to do business here - we will make recommendations to remove some of the barriers and restrictions we have here that are limiting this now.

Q: This is our future and if nothing is implemented it won't come to fruition - I don't see a lot of youth and what in the future will be put in to play in the future to ensure youth has a say into things in the future.

A: The group was established by the Minister of Agriculture and so the makeup was decided in that way. But we did realize the youth perspective was missing and hence the youth forum. The process is going to take several years - although we are compressing it in to months. We plan to meet every couple months to review what is being done and review what have become priority items. We will continue to make recommendations - this is not the end of the process. What we hear you say is that we need to keep the youth perspective alive as well - that is perhaps something we need to take into consideration as well. We intend to keep a strong watch on what happens with the government - we will not allow this sit on the shelf as simply another report.

Q: What is the definition of “migrant worker” as it is used in the interim recommendations and why is this recommendation there.

A: Migrant workers are primarily people from off shore - particularly people who work primarily in the market garden industry - used for the short window for harvest. Saskatchewan has no ability to use this type of labour (ex: Mexico). Some businesses in Saskatchewan would like to use these workers to harvest so that they don't have to go through 270 workers to get 30. (Question about cheap labour and about labour laws) They would fall under labour laws that would be established.

Q: Has the ACRE committee identified the barriers for growth with the alternative fuel sources eminent — are we losing potential for jobs and revenue?

A: We have some restrictions because a number of RMs have set their own policies and we have a higher tax base here than Alberta - we think we need to level that playing field. We need to fully exploit those opportunities for capital. We are also hoping that technology will help us extract more of our resources into the future (ex - oil in Weyburn).

Q: Why isn't “Saskatchewan” being taught in our schools? - There is only one out of my graduating class coming back to rural Saskatchewan. They see no positive outlook or future for us. Will new curriculum be changed to help this? And how long until these changes take effect?

A: There is a recommendation towards having more or different subject materials in Saskatchewan schools. Obviously we need jobs too, to get the youth to stay here. We need to have training in Entrepreneurial skills and the value of rural life, etc.

Q: Is there anything that can be done for people on welfare to get them working? Work for welfare as example (education and training).

A: Unfortunately forcing people to do jobs - although a good philosophical approach, does not fix the bigger issue. We are trying to provide people with skills that the economy requires etc.

- Q:** Where is the support for agriculture and agriculture industry diversification - why are there no databases for producers to access for information to develop business etc?
- A:** We have less than 50% of our income coming from livestock, and we did that to ourselves - so we now have to recover that. This takes time, and so we need to learn the skills, and capital to do this. We have all kinds of recommendations to move this situation around to get back and reverse this trend. Also with the database the government needs to have a database easily accessible to everyone - we understand there is work underway for this.
- Q:** Would like to know a little about the tax credit for businesses recommendation. Also would like to know is there access to capital or a database for people to help work in a small Saskatchewan business (instead of bringing in migrant workers)?
- A:** The tax credit in its simplest terms is that you get a credit on the value that you have added. It's to get value added enterprise into the province. The under 35 tax credit is to bring young people in to the province - bring the young entrepreneurs in. The issue of education and training - we made a recommendation for more education and training for our young people. We need to collect data for local communities to tap into for access to a labour force for them to use —we may have the human resources but don't know where to find them.
- Q:** How are you going to ensure this is not simply a study group? At what point do these things become specific measurable actions?
- A:** Minister Serby has already put together some sub committees to be certain some of these things come to fruition although some of these changes mean changing legislation so they will take time. We are all in favour of change, the process is to put forward the recommendation and then it has to be put through the government, we will be around to watch and see that this is done. We have been putting pressure as to the urgency of these issues - writing letters if we feel things are not happening quickly enough, etc.
- Q:** What types of policy recommendations are being made to form partnerships with First Nations?
- A:** In particular in Agriculture we are trying to look at what strategies we can do to expand ourselves in particular with partnerships regionally in the value added industry, export, and bio-tech - we want a piece. We see employment opportunities here. We need some training in these areas in order to be able to form partnerships - example: only one out of 3000 students in Agriculture is First Nations at the moment. Also there are some history issues that we need to get over. So these are very powerful issues that we are dealing with - but we want growth and partnership.
- Q:** How will we integrate First Nations into the new growing Saskatchewan? Who will cover the shrinking tax base that is being created? We feel this is something we really need to discuss and work at.
- A:** 85% of Aboriginal people in this country pay tax - that work. We know what our unemployment rate is etc. Unfortunately we have different groups that don't pay - democratic rules of government etc. — We have to respect that First Nations groups tax their people - they are a government. What we understand from our Treaty is that we have the right to tax people who do business on our territory. We don't view it as no tax - we see it as you tax, we tax. So that irritant is there. Some Nations are growing in taxation even.
- Q:** Was the ACRE Youth committee set up at the same time as the other committees and to what extent has each committee had time to consult with the youth of this province?
- A:** All the committees have talked to stakeholders of all ages. This youth forum was recognized as something that was recognized that was necessary fairly early on in the process - we needed to engage the youth. Admittedly, not from Day one. The recommendations made here will go back to the committee and will go forward to the government. We do not assume to have covered all the avenues but we realize we have a lot of information to cover and consulting to do - towards action.

One comment was made on Health Care and one thanking ACRE for their work.