

ASB Provincial Committee Meeting with Minister January 18, 2011 – Legislature Building

In attendance:

Minister Jack Hayden

Brett Sparrow, Executive Assistant to Minister

John Knapp, Deputy Minister, ARD

Jason Krips, Assistant Deputy Minister, ARD

Patrick Gordeyko, Northeast Region Representative and Chair of ASB Provincial Committee

Joe Gendre, Central Region Representative, ASB Provincial Committee

Garry Lentz, South Region Representative, ASB Provincial Committee

Mary Ann Eckstrom, Peace Region Representative, ASB Provincial Committee

Lloyd Giebelhaus, Northwest Region Representative, ASB Provincial Committee

Geoff Thompson, Secretary ASB Provincial Committee and AAAF 1st Vice President

Maureen Vadnais, Acting Supervisor, ASB Program, ARD

Pam Retzloff, ASB Program Co-ordinator, ARD

Introductions were made around the table and Pat made his opening comments thanking the Minister for taking time to meet with the Committee.

Tax Amendments Resolution

This was a 2007 resolution and a committee made up of Merle Good (ARD), Brian Brewin (MD of Taber) and Jeremy Robinson (County of St. Paul) was formed to make recommendations to the Minister. Pat thanked the Minister for forming this committee and the recommendations that came forward. The Minister advised that the next steps to push this forward was to go through the federal Agriculture Ministry and onto the Revenue Canada Agency. Minister Hayden said that he would be willing to take the recommendations forward to his federal counterparts.

SRD Wildlife Fencing Report

Mary Ann Eckstrom provided the Minister with some background information on this issue. She advised the Minister that the report from Sustainable Resource Development (SRD) regarding wildlife damage still had not been received by the ASB Provincial Committee. The Committee respectfully requests that they have an opportunity to see this report or an Executive Summary of this report and would like support to lobby SRD on this issue. There are still concerns regarding replacement hay, quantity and quality of fencing material supplied to protect hay stacks and timeliness of providing these materials.

John Knapp, Deputy Minister, said he would talk to SRD's Deputy Minister, Eric McGhan and try to get a copy of the report released to the ASB Provincial Committee.

The Provincial ASB Committee is willing to write a letter to support John Knapp in his request to SRD to release the report on wildlife damage and compensation.

The Minister responded by saying that Elk are an increasing concern and would like to continue to work with ASBs to resolve this issue. The Minister asked if protein tests were done on feed where these concerns are to help determine the quality of the feed. It is not easy to compare quality of feed damaged against quality of replacement hay if there is no baseline test completed.

There was also some question as to whether or not swath grazing should be covered as part of the compensation program. The opinion was expressed that if you leave feed laying on the ground as part of your management program, then you should expect that wildlife will come along and eat it.

Joe Gendre also raised the concern that elk are becoming an increasing problem in the Stettler area - an area of the province that elk are not indigenous to. The comment was made that there should be a more open hunting season on these animals in areas where they are not native. A short discussion followed regarding number of hunters in the province and how their numbers have significantly decreased over the years. This has contributed to the problem of larger herds of wildlife that are damaging producers feed stocks. Discussion also centered on different control options that producers have for wildlife on their own land, for example shooting elk that was damaging feed stocks on their own land.

ACTION ITEM: JOHN KNAPP TO SPEAK TO THE DM OF SUSTAINABLE RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT TO GET SRD REPORT ON WILDLIFE DAMAGE AND COMPENSATION

Strychnine – Emergency registration

Joe Gendre spoke to this issue and advised that Emergency registration for 2011 has already been applied for by Alberta Agriculture and it looks promising that strychnine will receive emergency registration for 2011. The Committee would still like the Province to continue to lobby the federal government for permanent registration of 2% liquid strychnine. The Minister said that he fully supported the Committee in this and that they would continue to work towards receiving permanent registration of 2% LS.

Garry Lentz remarked that having the ASBs administer the program prevents misuse and abuse of the product.

General Awareness – Clubroot and Fusarium

Soren Odegard talked to the Minister about this issue. Soren mentioned that there was a continuing need for awareness and education of producers for both clubroot and fusarium. Currently the ASB Provincial Committee supports having zero tolerance of fusarium on seed. They are in consensus with AAMC&C and the seed cleaning plants on this issue.

The Minister commented that there is pressure from seed growers in southern Alberta to allow up to 2% infection on seed so that they can continue to sell their product. The Minister would like statements and letters of support from municipalities across Alberta stating that they want to have no fusarium within their municipalities.

The comment was also made that mobile seed cleaning plants are a huge risk factor in the potential spread of this disease. There is currently no list of all the mobile seed cleaning plants within Alberta and it is unknown what their policy is regarding fusarium testing on seed that is to be cleaned in the plant.

Joe Gendre mentioned that it could be possible to tie premiums for crop insurance into clubroot and fusarium. Crop premiums could change according to different levels of risk. For example, AFSC has information that tells them what the rotation on a particular piece of land is. If AFSC saw that a producer had a short rotation between canola crops, for example, canola wheat canola wheat, then AFSC could raise that producer's premium because the risk of that producer getting clubroot in their field would increase. The same concept could apply to fusarium. For example, producers could pay a lower premium if they proved to AFSC that they tested and treated their seed for fusarium prior to planting.

It was also mentioned that there is a new seed treatment available for fusarium that is supposed to be extremely effective.

John Knapp said that he would investigate programs for increasing awareness and education for producers on these issues and approach AFSC to see if changes could be made to their policy to accommodate these requests.

The Minister reinforced that there is no plan to go from zero tolerance for the province of Alberta.

There were also three more issues raised with the Fusarium Action Committee (FAC). (1) AAAF representation on the FAC, (2) Chairman and (3) timeliness of getting information out. AAAF is willing to only have one voting member on the committee but had also requested that their other members be present at meetings to consult with their voting member as needed and provide input. This was accepted by the Chairman and other members of the FAC but concern still remained as some of the commodity groups had asked why AAAF was even invited to sit on the FAC. ARD expressed the opinion that the input of the fieldmen was welcomed and that there was no issue with AAAF continuing to be members of the FAC.

A second issue raised at the last FAC meeting was who should send letters. The chairman of the FAC, an ARD employee, felt it was inappropriate for him to send the letter to the Minister as he was an employee of the Ministry. The AAMD&C representative for the ASB committee also sits on the FAC and suggested that AAMD&C may be an appropriate co-chair for this committee. This would solve the problem of a letter coming to the Minister from an employee of the Ministry.

The third issue raised at the FAC was the timeliness of receiving information. Information from the December FAC meeting was not circulated to the committee members until the day before the meeting. Jason Krips, ADM, informed the committee that he had put tight timelines on the chairman of the committee and that the chairman may not have had adequate time to get the information out to all committee members. Jason Krips said that he would speak to the committee chairman and remind him to get agendas and minutes from previous meetings out in a more timely fashion.

ACTION ITEMS:

John Knapp to investigate funding and programs for education and awareness for producers about clubroot and fusarium.

John Knapp to discuss with AFSC changes to policy to allow premiums to be changed based on risk of pest presence (Clubroot and Fusarium)

Jason Krips to discuss changes to the Fusarium Action Committee (FAC) with Gayah Sieusahai, Pest Regulatory Officer, especially regarding who should chair the committee and timeliness of getting information out to committee members

Wild Boar Program

Lloyd Giebelhaus thanked the Minister for extending the Wild Boar Ear Bounty program. The Committee felt that this program was viable and reasonable and that it was helping with controlling the wild boar population throughout the Province. It was also mentioned that there is still need for a fencing regulation and that this should be looked at under the Livestock Industry Diversification Act (LIDA).

AESA/ASB Grant Integration

Geoff Thompson spoke to the issue of the Environmental Funding Stream of the integrated ASB Grant. There were concerns with how the money was distributed throughout the Province and it was felt that the results of the program weren't truly merit based as past program results were not considered as one of the criteria of the review process. The feeling was that all ASBs should have received an equal share of the Environmental Funding Stream and then be allowed to partner to deliver on their environmental extension and programs.

There was a recommendation to start consultation now to see how to change the program in the future and plan to start evaluating the program at the end of 2011-2012. It was suggested that the Extension Model used to start the Key Contact program be followed.

ASB Act review

Pat Gordeyko addressed this with the Minister and advised that the ASB Act had been scheduled to go to the Fall Sitting of the Legislature to be passed but was taken off the Legislature Review Schedule for the Fall and no new date has been assigned at this time. The ASB Provincial Committee requested the Minister put the ASB Act back onto the Legislative Review Schedule so the ASB Act can be updated and rewritten to better meet the needs of ASBs.

The Minister commented that it was difficult to get agriculture onto the agenda because of the current Health Care and Energy issues.

CFIA/OCPV informing ASBs of disease outbreaks

Garry Lentz advised the Minister that there have been several examples in the past where CFIA and Alberta Agriculture have not informed the ASB when there has been an outbreak of animal diseases within their municipality.

The Provincial Committee was informed that the Ministry has recently reviewed their processes and procedures regarding animal disease outbreaks and has determined that it would be suitable to discuss these issues with ASBs and municipal councils as an "in camera" meeting. One concern the Ministry has is protecting the confidentiality of the producer. An "in camera" session would help to protect the producer's confidentiality.

Other Issues

The committee briefly discussed some of the upcoming resolutions for the 2011 ASB Provincial Conference.