

Provincial ASB Committee
Meeting with Caucus Rural Development Committee
Minutes
July 13, 2018

Attendance:

Caucus Rural Development Committee

Colin Piquette, Chair, MLA Athabasca-Sturgeon-Redwater
Jessica Littlewood, MLA Fort Saskatchewan-Vegreville
Maria Fitzpatrick, MLA Lethbridge-East (conference call)
Kim Schreiner, MLA Red Deer-North (conference call)

Provincial ASB Committee

Corey Beck, Chair, Peace Representative
Steve Upham, Vice-Chair, Northeast Representative
Sebastien Dutrisac, Secretary, AAAF Representative
Wayne Nixon, Central Region Representative
Doug Macaulay, Agriculture and Forestry Representative
Maureen Vadnais, Executive Assistant

Introductions were made for the Committee members and MLAs present.

DISCONNECT BETWEEN RURAL MUNICIPALITIES AND GOVERNMENT AND MOVING FORWARD

The ASB Committee and MLAs started discussion about how the two groups could work together effectively. ASB members told the MLAs that many of the municipalities had expressed that there is a perceived disconnect between rural municipalities and current government members. The ASB Committee was hoping to help resolve this feeling of disconnect by working with the Rural Development Committee to advocate on issues important to ASBs. The Committee expressed its' frustration with not being able to meet with some Ministers and requested help from Rural Development Committee to make those connections and arrange meetings with those Ministers to discuss resolutions and other concerns brought forward by ASBs.

MLA Littlewood requested that the ASB Committee put together a "To Do" list of their top five issues so that Rural Development Committee can help them with.

The ASB members stressed to Rural Development their ability to connect with rural Alberta and the expertise that could be found within ASBs to assist them with matters related to agriculture and other rural issues. The ASB members highlighted the value of the ASB Program in being able to detect new threats and to respond to them quickly and how that was more cost efficient and effective than programs in jurisdictions in Canada.

ACTION ITEM: Rural Development Committee to assist ASB Committee in arranging meetings with Minister of Environment and Parks and others as needed

ACTION ITEM: ASB Committee to put together a "To Do" list for Rural Development Committee of top five issues

REVIEW OF ACTS RELATED TO ASB PROGRAMS

The ASB Committee expressed their frustration with the delay of the *Agricultural Pests Act* review. They informed Rural Development Committee that ASBs had several resolutions recommending changes to this Act and other related legislation and that the ASB Committee was available for consultation. The Committee used resolution 2-18: Appeals to the Minister under the *Weed Control Act* and *Agricultural Pests Act* as an example of one of the changes they would like made and how it was based on problems ASBs had encountered in the past and how making this change would allow for more effective enforcement of the Acts.

AGRICULTURAL PLASTICS RECYCLING

The ASB Committee discussed the current state of agricultural plastic recycling and plans to address this issue. The ASB Committee indicated the need for new legislation to address this issue and for a province wide pilot program.

2018 RESOLUTIONS

The ASB Committee briefly discussed some of the endorsed resolutions.

Resolution 1-18: Environmental Stream Funding of the Agricultural Service Board Grant

The ASB members informed Rural Development Committee about how it was hard for some ASBs to keep staff for their Environmental Programs due to confirmation of funding for these staff only coming after the provincial budget had been approved. Some ASBs don't have the financial resources to keep these staff without ASB Grant funding which means that many of these staff are laid off at the end of the calendar year before provincial budgets are approved for the following year. The ASB members said they would like to include this as part of the review of the ASB Program that is scheduled for 2018.

Resolution 2-18: Appeals to the Minister under the Weed Control Act and Agricultural Pests Act

Resolution 4-18: Weed Control on Alberta Vacant Public Lands within Green Areas

These resolutions were discussed together and as part of other issues. The ASB members informed Rural Development Committee of the province's duty under the Weed Control Act for land within the "Green Zone". The Committee highlighted that this was one of the reasons that they wanted to connect with the Minister of Environment to discuss the resolutions.

Resolution 5-18: Wildlife Predator Compensation Program Enhancement

The ASB members discussed the current program and the frustration that many producers were having with it. MLA Piquette said that other organizations, such as Alberta Beef Producers, were also frustrated with the current program. The ASB members told about the co-operative programs in place in some municipalities and how these were having a positive impact and requested Rural Development Committee advocate for this program.

Resolutions 6-18, 7-18, 9-18, 10-18 and 11-18 were not discussed in detail due to lack of time. A copy of the draft Report Card on the Resolutions has been sent to MLA Piquette for information.

Peace Region Genetically Modified (GM) Alfalfa Bylaws

ASB members highlighted that the Peace Region's access to U.S. markets is limited so they tend to focus more on Asian markets to sell alfalfa hay and seed. These markets are wary of accepting GM products so the Peace Region wants to elevate GM alfalfa to be a prohibited noxious weed so that it couldn't be grown in that region. This strategy was used in the past to prevent mustard from being grown in the

Peace Region and it was felt this would be appropriate to use this strategy again for GM alfalfa. The Minister has denied all bylaw applications elevating GM alfalfa to prohibited noxious so municipalities are now using the authority of the Municipal Government Act to create bylaws to accomplish this goal. This has created additional work for the municipalities.

BILL 6 IMPLEMENTATION

MLA Piquette asked if the Committee was hearing anything about the implementation of Bill 6. ASB members replied that they felt most farms were still trying to understand the regulations and how they applied to their farms.

NEXT MEETING

MLA Piquette suggested that the ASB Members meet again with Rural Development Committee in November during Rural Municipalities of Alberta (RMA) Convention. He felt it would be beneficial to continue sharing information.

ACTION ITEM: Maureen to arrange meeting for November during RMA Convention.