



STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE ECONOMY

Mr. Gene Makowsky, Chair
Regina Gardiner Park

Mr. Buckley Belanger, Deputy Chair
Athabasca

Mr. Steven Bonk
Moosomin

Mr. Bill Boyd
Kindersley

Ms. Lori Carr
Estevan

Mr. Delbert Kirsch
Batoche

Ms. Laura Ross
Regina Rochdale

[The committee met at 15:03.]

The Chair: — Good afternoon, committee members. For those watching on TV, this is the Economy Committee and we are scheduled for about half an hour this afternoon to consider supplementary estimates in the Agriculture ministry. It's 3:03 p.m. All the members are here, including one substitution: Ms. Sproule is here for Mr. Belanger.

**General Revenue Fund
Supplementary Estimates — November
Agriculture
Vote 1**

Subvote (AG10)

The Chair: — And again, the November supplementary estimates are up for debate this afternoon . . . for examination, rather. Vote 1, business risk management, subvote (AG10). The minister is here with his officials. If he does have any opening comments, I'll invite him to do that now. If not, we'll open the floor for questions. Go ahead.

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Thank you, Mr. Chair. It's a pleasure to appear for the purpose of Ministry of Agriculture supplementary estimates. The officials I have with me are Mr. Shawn Jaques, CEO [chief executive officer] of Crop Insurance Corporation; and to my right, Mr. Ray Arscott, executive director of corporate services, Ministry of Agriculture. We also have Ashley Anderson, chief of staff.

Mr. Chair, I don't think it's necessary or productive for me to make any opening comments in this case. We're prepared to just go directly to questions.

The Chair: — Thank you for that, Minister. And I will open the floor to questions from any committee members. I recognize Ms. Sproule. You have the floor.

Ms. Sproule: — Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, Mr. Minister, and officials, for coming in this afternoon. And I do want to get on the record that I want to congratulate the minister for the effort of the moustache over the month. I think we're getting near the end now, and it's certainly styling. So I just want to make sure that that's on the record.

I think this is a very straightforward estimate and I think, I can only assume that it's because of higher than expected crop insurance premiums. Maybe just the officials could give us — I don't have many questions — but a couple of comments on how you think this fits in the general scheme of the year-to-year processing of crop insurance claims. Is this an incredibly inordinate amount? Or is this one that's well within your usual range of variations when it comes to higher than usual crop premiums?

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Yes, I'll start this off if that's okay, and I think I'll turn it over to Mr. Jaques for more detail. This has been a, you know, a difficult later summer and harvest period with the larger than normal amount of crop being left out and some crop experiencing some quality issues because of wet weather and so on. But I think we're down to about 5 per cent

or less of the crop still out in the field.

So it was a pretty good effort on behalf of producers for the little good weather that they did get to finish up in November. And you know, there will be some issues because of crop left out and particularly because of quality concerns. But I'll turn over to Shawn Jaques, CEO of Crop Insurance, for more detail.

Mr. Jaques: — Thank you, Minister. You know, the minister did a good summary of what we faced this year. It began, you know, we actually seen a bit of an increase in the insured acres at SCIC [Saskatchewan Crop Insurance Corporation.] So, you know, the premium is a little bit higher.

You know, it started off to be a really good growing year, and we've seen many challenges in parts of the province, particularly with our pulses. Some of our largest pulse growing area is experiencing some, you know, some difficulty. We were very fortunate to get that week of warm weather in, week and a half in November. And you know, it got a lot of crop that came off.

The supplementary estimate that we're coming here for is for actually the additional premium, Ms. Sproule, because we insured more acres than we anticipated. We insured just over 29 million acres in this crop year.

Ms. Sproule: — On the whole, on the average, is that something that's within your expected ranges?

Mr. Jaques: — Yes. We again, we've . . . Over the last probably six, seven years, we've insured anywhere from 75 to 78 per cent of the seedable acres in Saskatchewan. And again I think it's right around that 77 per cent that we insured.

Ms. Sproule: — All right, Mr. Chair. I do not have any further questions on this estimate and want to thank the officials for coming, albeit briefly, to committee and sharing that information with us.

The Chair: — Thank you, Ms. Sproule. Are there any other questions from members? Seeing none, we will go through the voting off of the estimates. The officials are welcome to stay, and if they're not interested, we will continue on here.

We will look at vote 1, Agriculture, on page 13. And I should mention, thank you very much for the officials for showing up. I neglected to do that at the beginning. Thank you for your time this afternoon to aid us in our work as the committee.

So we're on vote 1, Agriculture from page 13 of the Estimates, budget risk management, subvote (AG10) in the amount of 15,929,000. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — It's carried. Agriculture, vote 1, in the amount of 15,929,000. I'll now ask a member to move the following resolution:

Resolved that there be granted to Her Majesty for the 12 months ending March 31st, 2017, the following sums for

Agriculture in the amount of 15,929,000.

Ms. Carr. I recognize Ms. Carr has so moved. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — Carried. So committee members, I believe you all have before you a draft of the second report of the Standing Committee on the Economy. We require a member to move the following motion:

That the second report of the Standing Committee on the Economy be adopted and presented to the Assembly.

Mr. Kirsch: — I so move.

The Chair: — Mr. Kirsch has moved. Is that agreed?

Some Hon. Members: — Agreed.

The Chair: — That is carried. All right. Thank you, committee members. Are there any final comments you'd like to pass along to the committee, Mr. Minister?

Hon. Mr. Stewart: — Only to thank you, Mr. Chair, the committee members, and Ms. Sproule for the great questions. And thank you very much.

The Chair: — Thank you very much. Well it was very brief but I think productive as well. It's important to get these through. Next time we will try and break the record for brevity, and we'll see what we can do. But we need a motion for adjournment. Would anybody like to do that?

Mr. Bonk: — I so move.

The Chair: — Mr. Bonk. I recognize Mr. Bonk. Thank you. That is carried. This committee stands adjourned to the call of the Chair. Thank you all.

[The committee adjourned at 15:11.]