



SASKATCHEWAN LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FIRST REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE

Order of Reference

On December 7th, 1999, the Legislative Assembly appointed and issued the following order of reference to the Standing Committee on Agriculture:

That notwithstanding an order of reference dated December 6th, 1999, made pursuant to Rule 94(1) of the *Rules and Procedures of the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan*, Members Boyd, Bjornerud, Harpauer, Harper, Lingenfelter, Melenchuk, Serby, Wartman and Weekes be appointed forthwith the Standing Committee on Agriculture, and that the said committee be severally empowered to examine and inquire into all such matters and things as may be referred to it by this Assembly, and to report from time to time their observations thereon; with power to send for persons, papers and records, and to examine witnesses under oath;

And further, that at this present time, the said Committee do specifically receive and report on representations from interested parties and individuals with respect to the farm income crisis now facing western Canadian farmers; and to this purpose, the said Committee be authorised to conduct its proceedings in the Legislative Chamber, except when the Assembly is sitting, and that the Committee proceedings be televised by the Legislative Assembly on the Saskatchewan Legislative Network, and further that the Legislative Assembly do also broadcast the audio of the proceedings on the Internet via the Legislative Assembly of Saskatchewan web site.

Method of Operation

The Committee met, organized and conducted hearings in the Legislative Chamber on December 7th. Your Committee is pleased that the Legislative Assembly recognized the importance of its mandate by authorizing the use of the Legislative Assembly for its hearings. This is the first time in the Legislative history of the province that a Standing Committee held public hearings in the Legislative Chamber. Your Committee is also pleased that the Assembly also authorized the use of the Saskatchewan Legislative Network to permit television broadcast of its hearings provincewide. The Committee also acknowledges the permission of the Assembly to carry out an audio transmission of its proceedings on the Legislative Assembly web site. This website audio is the first time any legislative proceedings of any kind have been broadcast by this method. All of these unprecedented measures served to demonstrate the province-wide importance of the issue before the committee.

It was agreed, in order to hear from as many individuals and interested parties as possible in the short time frame available to the committee, that presentations would be restricted to twenty minutes in length. The Committee heard from 28 witnesses, who represented 17 groups. A complete list witnesses is attached to this report as Table Document AG01. All told, the Committee conducted 6 hours of hearings and received 15 written submissions.

The Committee offers its sincere gratitude for all those individuals and organizations that made the effort of preparing briefs and providing testimony.

Recommendations

The public hearings held by the Standing Committee on Agriculture underscored the necessity for immediate relief from the farm income crisis that now confronts western Canadian farmers. The testimony of the witnesses who appeared at hearings held by the Committee demonstrate the urgency for the need of this immediate relief. Therefore, your Committee recommends as follows:

That the verbatim transcript of the hearings be forwarded to the Prime Minister, the federal Minister of Agriculture, the federal Minister responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board and all Opposition Party Leaders.

That the Assembly request that the Prime Minister cause the House of Commons to have an emergency debate on this issue.

That this Assembly strongly urges the Government of Canada to immediately provide an agricultural trade equalization payment of \$1 billion to Saskatchewan farm families to address the agriculture crisis now facing our farms, our rural communities, our urban communities, and our province.