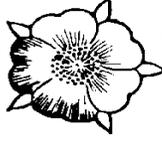


WILD ROSE



NEWS

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Volume 27, Issue 1

WINTER 2000

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

BY NEIL WAGSTAFF

On January 13 & 14, 2000 Wild Rose Agricultural Producers held a very successful convention in Red Deer. We had excellent attendance, top notch panel discussions; keynote speakers; and plenty of good discussion regarding current issues facing agriculture in Alberta. I hope everyone who attended found the time spent worthwhile and will come to next year's convention. A date and location of next year will be set at our Board meeting on February 29th, so if you have any suggestions for changes or ideas for the convention please contact our office and pass these on to Rod Scarlett.

As the new President of Wild Rose, I would like to briefly introduce myself. I grew up on a mixed farm near Elnora, which is southeast of Red Deer. My wife Mary and I operate a grain farm close to where I grew up. We produce wheat, barley, canola and peas. We started farming on a part-time basis in 1975 while we both worked at other occupations and have been full time farming since 1989.

At the annual convention a resolution was passed which expanded the Board of Directors of Wild Rose to nine people, one of whom will represent the Women of Unifarm. After the elections we now have three new members on the Board along with six former members. This past fall saw some new people

become Regional Directors as well. New people are always good for an organization and I look forward to working with these people.

If you have any issues or concerns you would like to have Wild Rose deal with, please contact one of the Regional Directors, a regional contact person, a board member or our Edmonton office.

There are many things that generally affect all farmers no matter what commodities they produce. As the farming population becomes a smaller and smaller proportion of the overall population, it becomes ever more important for farmers to have a unified voice. Special commodity and production organizations provide an important role and service to their particular sector of farming. However, they often do not or cannot get involved with issues that affect a large majority of farmers. Wild Rose is a General Farm Organization and its attention must be focussed on matters that affect farmers in general.

Farmers need to work together locally, provincially, nationally and even internationally if the best interests of their industry are to be looked after. We cannot just continue to give

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT – CONT'D

blind trust to Provincial and Federal Government to develop the best policies and programs that affect farmers and the rural communities where they live.

The low income situation facing many farm commodities shows little sign of improving in the near future. Farmers must provide guidance and constructive criticism to gain the attention of those who make decisions that affect our ability to survive in the current market place. An organized effort to inform the general public, media and government officials about the circumstances facing farming businesses and families needs to continue.

My biggest hope for Wild Rose is that it can become an even more effective voice for farmers in Alberta than it has been so far. The members of Wild Rose needs to grow and Wild Rose must work hard to represent the best interests of all farmers in Alberta. The only way Wild Rose can be more successful is to have more farmers participating. If you are a supporter of Wild Rose, please talk to your friends and neighbours and encourage them to become members.

Neil Wagstaff

AGRICULTURE AND CLIMATE CHANGE/GREENHOUSE GAS REDUCTIONS – RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES

The debate over climate change is a complex mix of political, economic and scientific issues. Canada has committed to reduce the nation's greenhouse gas emissions under the international Kyoto Protocol (to 6% below 1990 levels by 2010). National and provincial plans designed to meet Canada's commitment have indicated that all greenhouse gas emitters – including the agriculture and food processing industry – will be expected to do their fair share in reducing emissions.

“It is apparent that the government intends to take some kind of action,” says Peggy Strankman, Canadian Cattlemen's Association (CCA) representative on the Agriculture and Agri-Food Table. This Table is one of 16 issues tables set up under the national climate change process, with responsibility to assess options to reduce emissions. “The CCA felt it was important to participate in the process to ensure that the views of cattle producers were heard and reflected in any policies that might arise from the process.”

Other sectors of our economy have been preparing to deal with this issue for a few years. The agriculture and food processing industry needs to become involved to help shape the national and provincial processes to meet the potential challenges this issue may present.

Listed below are some of the key risks and opportunities for our industry.

- **Risk – The industry could be expected to reduce emissions in ways that could limit its productivity.** Without strong industry involvement, guidelines or regulations that are developed to meet Canada's commitment might not consider the industry's special needs. For example, while carbon dioxide is the main emission by most industries, the crop and livestock sectors' main emissions are nitrous oxide and methane – both much more potent than carbon dioxide in their greenhouse gas effect. So solutions for other industries are not the entire solution for agriculture.
- **Opportunity – Practices that reduce emissions can help to conserve resources and improve efficiencies.** Many cost-effective practices, such as direct seeding and using forages in rotation, conserve soil, water and energy also help reduce emissions. As well, carbon and nitrogen losses to the atmosphere represent lost nutrients and other inefficiencies. For instance, in the cattle industry, “Many of the actions that will decrease greenhouse gas emissions will also improve efficiencies,” says Strankman. “These actions include manure management, increasing feed efficiencies and calving success, and improving grazing management.”
- **Risk – The industry's competitiveness could be affected.** There is speculation that international trade sanctions and other

RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES – CONT'D

limits to market access might be used to enforce compliance to Kyoto commitments. In addition, if the industry is required to use costly options to reduce emissions, then its products could have a cost disadvantage.

- **Opportunity – Emissions reduction could enhance the industry's image.** The majority of consumers in Canada and abroad feel that action has to be taken now on this issue. By actively reducing emissions, the industry could demonstrate its stewardship ethic. This approach could improve its market opportunities among consumers concerned about the environment.
- **Risk – The science has uncertainties.** In terms of the science of global warming, there are uncertainties around some factors (i.e. the definitive link between anthropogenic GHG emissions and global warming). There are also issues around the science of measuring gas emissions and storage. For example, Strankman says, "Emissions from cattle are currently calculated as though the entire herd were mature cows. However, about half our herd are calves, and calves produce much less methane." She also notes, "Currently the Kyoto agreement doesn't recognize opportunities to store carbon in agricultural lands. If that recognition is not
- **Opportunity – The national process could result in research incentives.** Influence from the industry could help to ensure that incentives are available for research to more accurately determine emissions and storage, and to develop practical options for the industry to practice good stewardship while making a living.
- **Risk/Opportunity – Climate change could affect the industry.** Some of the potential impacts for the prairies could include more frequent and severe droughts, and higher temperatures. Although higher temperatures might increase crop choices and yields, they could also increase numbers of certain insect pests and diseases.

forthcoming, it will be very difficult for Canada to meet its emissions reduction targets." Without accurate information, it could be difficult to assess which options truly reduce emissions the most.

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CONVENTION 2000 SEMINAR HIGHLIGHTS

BY ROBERT FILKOHAZY

In conjunction with the Annual Convention Wild Rose Agricultural Producers held an informative seminar emphasizing our theme 'An Effective Voice for Agriculture in Alberta'. The seminar included a wide range of topics affecting agriculture that we need to make informed decisions on.

Ty Lund, the Minister of Agriculture, Food & Rural Development brought greetings from the Alberta Government. The Minister informed the delegation of his department's intention to hold an Agricultural Summit in the province. Wild Rose has urged the Minister to consider a rural development summit in Alberta and to include representatives of education, health, business and local government as well as agriculture. The Minister also told us that a Crop Insurance Review would be conducted in the fall of 2000. Wild Rose again urged the Minister to undertake the review of the crop insurance program immediately so that changes could be made prior to the new crop year.

A Panel discussion on 'Biotechnology and Food Safety' proved to be a very timely topic. Craig Evans, General Manager of Monsanto's Canadian Biotech & Seed Business said Monsanto is actively trying to reinforce consumer confidence in biotech food safety. He also stated that biotechnology offers a diversity of products, addresses agronomic concerns and strengthens the economic viability of producers by allowing farmers to remain competitive. Brad Dowell, from the Agricultural Production and Animal Sciences programs at Olds College said they help prepare students for new opportunities in agriculture that many times include biotechnology. Kim Meegan, Policy Analyst for the Canadian Federation of Agriculture talked about a number of issues that support the use of biotechnology. She informed us that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency checks the effects of biotechnology on humans, animals and

the environment. She also explained how the biotechnology used in agriculture is the same biotechnology used in pharmaceuticals, as well as acknowledging the concern our biotech plants becoming a weed.

A session was held on the 'Farm Crisis' problem, a topic that is on all farmers' minds. Producers are trying to cope with low commodity prices especially in the grains and oilseed sector. Darryl Vandenberg, with Alberta Pork was very much in agreement that there was a farm income problem, and that increasing yields, diversification and the use of biotechnology wasn't the answer because it adds to our expenses. Sharon Eistetter, a District Manager with the Farm Credit Corporation said that not only is farm debt increasing in Alberta, but so is the amount of arrears. Jack Hayden, President of the Alberta Association of Municipal Districts & Counties, announced a number of alarming statistics that substantiate the severity of the farm crisis. He said one in three jobs in Alberta are Ag related and yet 67 percent of farmers in Alberta will lose money this year. Mr. Hayden summed up the impact of the farm crisis very well when he said this is a national issue and a people issue, not just a farmer issue.

Hon. Lyle Vanclief, the Federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Foods chose the Wild Rose Convention to make his announcement of additional funding to safety nets for the years 2000 and 2001. He also outlined their intentions to allow farmers early access to next crop year's Cash Advance Program based on 40 percent of the previous years eligibility. None of these new initiatives were well received by the delegation.

An informative and open panel discussion 'The Media's Influence on Agriculture' was presented by three very competent and respected journalists. Caitlynn Reesor, the Agri-Services Editor at

CFCW Radio said that with having both rural and urban listeners the media can sometimes blow-up a story, for example the GMO controversy. Elaine Shein, Editor for the Western Producer said the media carries a tremendous responsibility when it comes to accurate reporting, especially with inexperienced reporters and where they get their information from. Dianne Finstad, the Agricultural Director at CKRD TV said that while the media has a duty to inform the public about agriculture, they can also be the eyes and ears of agriculture and have the ability to check the facts.

Dean Lien, the Farmers' Advocate, stressed the need for a strong General Farm Organization because commodity groups interests are narrower in scope. An alarming statistic put forward by Mr. Lien, that 61 percent of farm income in Alberta is from off-farm jobs, should be a top priority as an agriculture concern. He also stated that it is paramount for groups to set aside their differences and let a GFO speak with one voice for agriculture.

Jack Swainson, the Vice-President of the Alberta Conservation Tillage Society, talked about Land Stewardship and Conservation and said their goal was to reduce tillage in Alberta. He also talked about their water quality and manure management projects, as well as the Greenhouse Gas Issue. He cautioned farmers that even though farmland has the ability to sequester carbon, don't sell all your carbon credits because you may need them in the future to recover other emissions from your farming practices.

A panel discussion on 'Grain Handling and Transportation Reforms' demonstrated the diversity of opinion over the Estey Report, and why consensus was so difficult to obtain during the Kroeger process.

CONVENTION 2000 SEMINAR HIGHLIGHTS – CONT'D

Greg Rockafellow, President of Prairie Farm Commodity Coalition said they were supporting the railways' Revenue Cap proposal, because if we didn't keep the freight rate high, we would encourage branchline abandonment. It appears branchline abandonment is inevitable regardless of the freight rate. They are advocating the Canadian Wheat Board should be completely out of transportation as well as taking possession at port only. They also advocate open tendering to reduce costs. This scenario would give grain companies all the blending revenues, and it would be to their discretion who would share it. PFCC has said that we need to adopt the Estey Report in its entirety, but when it comes to Open Access of rail lines, they say it needs more study.

Ray Foot, Assistant Vice President of Grain with Canadian Pacific, is also advocating the Canadian Wheat Board should be at Port only and out of transportation. He stated that CP is not making enough return on their capital investment, contrary to reports that they are receiving well in excess of their 20 percent margin allowed by the Canadian Transportation Agency. It was interesting to hear that the railways believe they are being targeted by the Kroeger process.

Brant Randles, Vice President of Louis Dreyfus Canada, was adamant that we must adopt Kroeger in its entirety and competition (trust me!) will reduce all costs. Mr. Randles was critical of the present system being an entitlement of handlings opposed to a system where you would have to earn your business.

Gordon Smillie, Wild Rose Agricultural Producers representative on the Rates and Revenue Committee, said that full implementation of Estey Report was impossible, because it was a very complex issue with a very short time span to try and gain consensus. Mr. Smillie said, he approached the Kroeger process with compromise in mind to seek a situation that would complement all stakeholders, but others at the table did not. He also said producers would have to put a lot of trust in grain companies and the railways to share productivity grains. Mr. Smillie said a failure of the Kroeger process was that the fuel tax issue for road improvements was not addressed by committee or the far-end government. He was also disappointed that our provincial government would spend four months helping to develop a farmer position and then change their position when the report was completed. It begs the question why? It also makes you ask where is Ag Policy in Alberta Agriculture coming from?

Overall, we had a great Seminar, lots of information and a lot of knowledge to help us make those informed decisions. A workshop every farmer in Alberta should have been at!

WOMEN OF UNIFARM ESTABLISH SEAT ON BOARD OF DIRECTORS

“To the members of Wild Rose Agricultural Producers, thank you for accepting Women of Unifarm on your Board. Your action on January 14, 2000 sends a message that our organizations are committed to working together for the betterment of agriculture in this province,” said President Florence Trautman.

President Florence Trautman, on behalf of Women of Unifarm, presented an amendment that one of the proposed 9-member Board be significantly identified in the Wild Rose Agricultural Producers Constitution and By-Laws for the farm women's organization of Women of Unifarm. The amendment was accepted and the members of the 4th Annual Convention of Wild Rose Agricultural Producers voted unanimously to welcome

Women of Unifarm as a permanent member on the Board of Directors.

Mrs. Jennifer Boccock, 1st Vice-President, a dairy farmer in St. Albert, has been appointed to be the representative for Women of Unifarm. Mrs. Boccock currently sits on health and environmental committees. She is greatly interested in effecting a healthy safe environment for agricultural workers and their families. Jennifer and her husband John are long time members of Unifarm and Wild Rose Agricultural Producers, and she is looking forward to being an active member on the Board. In June, the Women of Unifarm convention floor will address the matter of an annual selection process for this appointment.

**AGRICULTURAL BIOTECHNOLOGY:
WILL THE REAL CONSUMER PLEASE STAND UP?
BY RENE HERING
MANITOBA FARMERS' VOICE, WINTER 1999 PUBLICATION**

I was reading the October 18, 1999 issue of Maclean's magazine when I came across an article on biotechnology called "The Food Fight." Accompanying the article was a half page color photo of a group of Greenpeace activists uprooting a crop of maize near Norwich, England in July of this year. They were outfitted in white coveralls with white Xs within large red circle on their backs, working quickly to destroy as many plants as possible. It was deliberately made to look like the scene of a full scale environmental disaster such as an oil spill or a nuclear reactor meltdown. Oddly enough, the photo reminded me of the mob scene in the 1931 Universal Studios version of Frankenstein.

Activists have come up with the "Frankenfood" or "Frankenstein food" metaphor to make biotechnology look like a crime against nature itself, but the metaphor ironically belies the rational credibility activists are seeking. In the Frankenstein story, Dr. Frankenstein's imaginative and impossible experiment turned out to be monstrous, but the mob that destroyed Frankenstein's creation was equally as monstrous. The mob reacted with violence on the basis of emotion and ignorance, and reason had little to do with it.

On October 28, 1999, Friends of the Earth held a rally to "raise consumer awareness about the potential dangers of unlabeled, untested GE foods". The president of Friends of the Earth, Dr. Brent Blackwelder led the march alongside "the Frankenfood Monster" to Adams Morgan Safeway in Washington, D.C. The news advisory put out by the group exclaimed "excellent visuals' camera crews encouraged." Indeed, The "Frankenfood Monster" was an activist sporting a fish head and a strawberry mask. I've also been told by the office of Friends of the Earth that there were a number of activists wearing Frankenstein and other Halloween masks.

Such events, which are set up to attract media attention, do little to raise public awareness but go a long way to creating public anxiety. Generally, the fear and anxiety that the average citizen feels has little basis in fact. In other words, anti-biotech activists are exhibiting elitist attitudes by deciding that agricultural biotechnology is inherently evil, spreading the message that it is evil yet not providing the public with adequate information to have them decide on their own. However, consumers either harbour concerns while having almost no knowledge of the science, or are not as anxious toward agricultural biotechnology as the activists would have you believe. In order to determine what informed consumers really think, some credible work is beginning in earnest on research regarding biotechnology and Canadians attitudes toward it. Consumer concerns about biotechnology do exist in varying degrees and since markets could be at

risk, the agricultural sector should address these concerns.

Many people are aware of the fact that media outlets are businesses, but few understand the full implications of this statement. Decisions on what we see or read are made by editors based on the single underlying concept of universality. Most editors, and journalists for that matter are in the business of providing information that interests as many people as possible. This is done by assessing the news value of a story idea, which also acts as a gauge for measuring a story's relative importance. News value is directly proportional to its appeal to the greatest number of people in a specific market area. The more people who are interested in your story, the more papers you sell or audience share you gain or maintain, both of which translate into revenue. Like any other business, media outlets have to contend with market share (amount of viewers/readers/listeners), competition, budgetary concerns, and, most important, profit. While they contend with the pressures of procuring profit, media outlets must also maintain the image of being credible, fair, balanced and objective seekers of truth. Paradoxically, this image has long been a very successful part of untold numbers of marketing strategies.

This paradox is a important one. Nothing sells a news story like the drama of emotional conflict. Throw a corporation into the mix as the enemy and you have got a formula for success. This is how groups like Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth manipulate the media, using it to esoterically shape public opinion. At the same time, they are generating revenue for media outlets. Money is being used as a motivator for the media to report the activists' version of the truth. Usually, emotional conflict is widely accepted as the arch enemy of knowledge, rationality, and sober thought – the very pillars of a civilized society. This notion, however, is undermined partly by emotion itself and partly by the media's reputation as the unwavering champion of truth.

In a move to attract viewers (and the profit that goes with it), the event was more than likely the lead or top story in a number of newsrooms, leading audiences to believe that the message behind the rally must be factually accurate. After all, if it isn't true, why would it be on the news?

This creates a very empty public opinion on biotechnology, one that is arrived at without access to an appropriate amount of information. About one year ago, the National Institute of Nutrition (NIN) conducted a qualitative study , involving 11 focus groups of principal grocery shoppers in six cities from Halifax to Vancouver. The study sought to explore consumer reaction to a range of possible label messages which could inform shop-

pers that foods were genetically modified. A recent issue of the NIN publication RAPPORT, which featured results of the study, pointed to the fact that wide-spread misunderstanding regarding biotechnology exists. For example, when asked what genetically modified means, "it was generally believed that chemicals had been added to the food, rendering it no longer 'natural'." Exploration of the word "biotechnology" drew negative reaction, but this reaction was partly due to the fact that "the public feels confused and alarmed when sensitized by media reports about genetic experimentation." The study also found that "although labels are important, shoppers would welcome other sources of information on the role of biotechnology in food."

In an attempt to appear that they are providing the public with adequate information to make an informed decision, anti-biotech activists have quoted scientific "evidence," but make no mention of the fact that this evidence is controversial at best, and fallacious at worst. For example, Winnipeg Free Press columnist Penni Mitchell has written about biotechnology six times since April 27, 1999. Out of those six columns, three included are reference to the now famous, and inconclusive, "Scottish lab rat" experiment as proof that biotechnology compromises food safety.

In August 1998, Dr. Arpad Pusztai, who had worked at the Rowett Research Institute in Scotland, reported that his tests had shown that GM potatoes were harmful to rats because of their genetic modification. He made his research public before it had been reviewed by his peers and days later he was suspended and eventually retired from his post.

Initially, the experiment was seen as proof that genetically engineered food is dangerous. Since that time, however, the research has come under some heavy criticism from the scientific community. The October 31, 1998 issue of the New Scientists reported that "Pusztai fed separate groups of rats on normal or GM potatoes to see if the GM food had different effects. That's good, basic toxicology. Unfortunately, he couldn't

make the animals eat enough potato, so they were malnourished no matter which kind they were eating. According to toxicologists who examined the data, changes in their organ weights and immune reactivity showed no unambiguous association with genetic modification (This Week, 6 March, p 13). Starvation or known toxins in raw potato were the most likely culprits for any changes seen in the rats." In May of 1999, a report the U.S. Royal Society stated "no conclusions should be drawn" from the research, which was "flawed in many aspects of design, execution and analysis."

Similarly, a study conducted by scientists at Cornell University and published in May of this year in the journal Nature concluded that Bt Corn (modified to include a toxin derived from a bacterium called *Bacillus thuringiensis*) could be killing American Monarch butterflies and other beneficial insects. This study is mentioned widely in Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace media releases in the United States. However, in August, two studies were performed by scientists at the Institute of Arable Crop Research (IACR) in Harpenden, Hefordshire which contradicted the Cornell University research. The IACR study was also published in the journal Nature. Despite this, an October 7, 1999 Greenpeace media release quoted the Cornell study as conclusive evidence while failing to even acknowledge the second study.

Canadian and American environmental activist groups have been calling for the Canada and the U.S. to follow the Europeans' lead when it comes to rejecting GMOs, largely based on the actions of the European Union and a number of European supermarket chains. On October 27, 1999, MSNBC News Service, with contributions from Reuters and the Associated Press, reported on a survey, the largest of its kind to date, conducted for the European Commission which found that "when asked to rank nine environmental issues in order of seriousness, Europeans ranked concern over GMOs as their lowest priority". The article also states that "apparent public concern about the safety of foods

processed from GM crops has lead to a de facto moratorium on new GMOs in the EU and raised the prospect of another damaging trade dispute with the United States. A number of supermarket chains have said they will not use GMOs in their own-brand products." It is important to note that, in Europe, environmental activism regarding biotechnology is the strongest, yet claims made by activists are not fully supported by widespread public opinion.

Conversely, one could surmise that in Canada, where the presence of Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth is comparatively nonexistent (with the possible exception of Toronto), the public would be far less concerned about GMOs. This is not the case, although public opinion still does not mirror the extent of the concern expressed by these groups.

A public forum held at the University of Calgary this March entitled "Citizen's Conference on Food Biotechnology, Designer Genes at the Dinner Table," featured a citizen's jury of 15 average Canadians who studied background material on biotechnology and cross-examined expert panelists from government, industry, consumer and environmental groups, and science and academia. The jury members were chosen from 356 individuals who applied throughout the four western provinces. Fifty were interviewed by phone to determine impartiality and diversity. The final jury members were chosen from that group. The prerequisite was that all members have no personal connection to biotechnology and have an interest in food. The project director was Edna Einseidel, Professor in the Graduate Program in Communication studies at the University of Calgary. Einseidel's main objective was that the process is seen from both sides as credible. By the accounts of jury members, who said they would trust recommendations made by public juries in other parts of Canada, the objective was achieved.

(Continued on page 12)

WILD ROSE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS RESOLUTIONS PASSED AT THE FOURTH ANNUAL CONVENTION - 2000

Check-Off for General Farm Organization

Be It Resolved that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers approach the Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Development to have a check-off for a general farm organization.

Abandoned CP Branchline

Whereas the Canadian Pacific branchline from Coalhurst to Turin has been abandoned and is not being maintained;
Be It Resolved that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers request Canadian Pacific Railway to dismantle that branchline and return the land to adjacent landowners.

Kroeger Report

Whereas within the scope of options discussed in the Grain Handling & Transportation Review headed by Arthur Kroeger;
Be It Resolved that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers support the position paper put forward by Wild Rose Agricultural Producers, Keystone Agricultural Producers and SARM.

Moved by Ron Leonhardt

Seconded by John Ross

That the Board of Directors of Wild Rose Agricultural Producers be given some flexibility to continue to negotiate the best possible deal on behalf of producers as it relates to the grain handling and transportation review.

Genetic Modified Organism

Whereas there is an uncertainty concerning consumer acceptance of Genetically Modified Organisms and their products;

Be It Resolved that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers encourage government and private industry to conduct open, consumer orientated scientific studies to prove the safety of these products in the human food chain.

Cheap Food

Whereas we continue to have a cheap food in Canada;

Be It Resolved that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers study and promote methods for grain prices to increase.

Carbon Tax

Whereas the Canadian Government committed Canada to a 6 percent cut in carbon emissions at Kyoto in relation to 1991 emissions, and

Whereas there is some action on receiving carbon credits on agricultural land;

Be it resolved that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers encourage the government to look at granting credits rather than to impose a carbon tax.

Independent Producer Commission

Whereas the Alberta Grain Commission was originally established in 1972 with a mandate to develop policy recommendations for the Minister of Agriculture; and

Whereas the Alberta Grain Commission has now identified as one of its mandates that it will "advocate policies set out by the Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Development, and

Whereas the projected budget for 2000/2001 sits at approximately \$231,000 for Alberta Grain Commission now, in part, acts as a public relations arm of the Department of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Development; and

Whereas the money could better be spent by obtaining policy direction from non-government sources;

Be it Resolved that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers urge the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development to review the mandate of the Alberta Grain Commission, and, if necessary, use the funds to develop an independent producer commission whose members would be selected by producers.

AIDA

Whereas in March of 1999, the then Minister of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Development asked various organizations

RESOLUTIONS – CONT'D

on how the “freed up” money as a result of the federal AIDA program should be spent, and

Whereas to date, no announcement has been made as to how much money became available nor where that money would be allocated;

Be It Resolved that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers urge the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development to announce where the AIDA money has been spent.

Review of Crop Insurance Program

Whereas the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development recently announce that a major review of the crop insurance would be conducted in the year 2000;

Be It Resolved that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers urge the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development to immediately undertake to review the crop insurance program so that at least some of the recommendations can be considered for the upcoming crop year.

Rural Development Summit in Alberta

Whereas farm incomes and rural development are intricately related, and

Whereas the federal government will be hosting a national rural development summit;

Be It Resolved that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers strongly urge the Provincial Government to consider a rural development summit in Alberta, which would include representatives of education, health, business, local government and agricultural, to discuss implementing effective policies that represent the unique needs of rural Alberta.

Net Farm Income

Whereas presently farmers must use 15% of gross farm receipts as a proxy for calculating net farm income in allocating self-employment earnings against EI benefits arising from off-farm employment, and

Whereas unlike other self-employed people who can calculate self-employment earnings based on net income, farmers must automatically deduct from their EI benefit 15% of gross farm receipts regardless of the actual income earned from the farm operation, and

Whereas Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada has suggested that 5% would be more appropriate;

Be It Resolved that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers urge the Minister of Human Resources and Development Canada to immediately reduce the 15% calculation to 5% of gross farm receipts as a proxy for net farm income.

Grain Handling & Transportation Review

Whereas there is increasing pressures being placed on our rural roads as a result of elevator consolidation and rail line abandonment;

Be It Resolved that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers urge the Federal Government to immediately adopt Recommendation 11 of the Grain Handling and Transportation Review Report submitted by Justice Estey whereby some of the considerable federal fuel tax collected would be applied to the construction, maintenance and repair of the municipal grid roads and secondary provincial highways.

Occupiers Liability Legislation

Whereas Alberta's Occupiers Liability Legislation does not adequately protect the landowner in cases where an individual or group are permitted access to the land and suffer injury, and

Whereas this legislation has recently been amended in Alberta in respect of public lease lands, but not for private deeded land, and

Whereas several Provinces and States have recently amended their legislation to hold the owners of privately deeded lands harmless in such circumstances,

Be It Resolved that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers urge the Government of Alberta to amend its Occupiers Liability Legislation to hold the landowners of deeded lands harmless in respect of personal injury sustained by the public, and in so doing protect farmers from the potentially high cost of a law suit, and associated insurance.

Potential Export of Water

Whereas Alberta's agricultural production depends on the availability of water and markets, and

Whereas Alberta has abundant water available in certain areas, and

Whereas agricultural production from nations which compete in our domestic markets is also dependent on reliable wa-

RESOLUTIONS – CONT'D

ter.

Whereas even though our governments deny the possibility, the potential export of water is a frequent topic in the media.

Therefore Be It Resolved that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers develop a paper to explain the benefits for the Alberta economy of developing and promoting agriculture in Alberta, rather than exporting water.

Be It Further Resolved that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers' members encourage the commodity groups they are involved with to provide input to Wild Rose on the potential economic benefits to farmers and the Alberta economy that will accrue as a result of producing food and products for domestic and export markets, rather than exporting water itself.

Canadian Wheat Board Policies

Be It Resolved that Wild Rose Agricultural Producers strongly recommend that the Canadian Wheat Board need to broaden their policies in order to become as flexible, progressive and innovative as the producer must be in order to stay in business.

COMING EVENTS

February 23-25, 2000

Canadian Federation of Agricultural
Annual Meeting
Ottawa, Ontario

March 22-25

Northlands Farm & Ranch Show
Northlands Agricom
Edmonton, Alta.

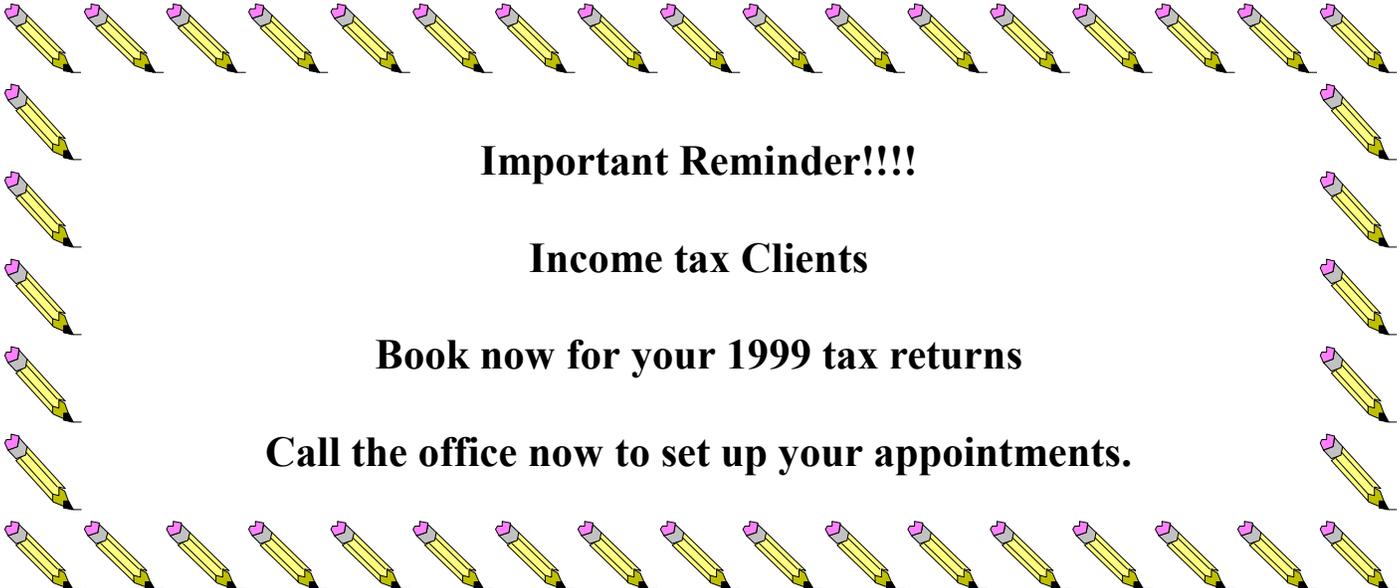
Lethbridge Ag Expo

Exhibition Grounds
Lethbridge, Alta

District 101

Annual Meeting
March 6, 2000
Hussar, Alta
Contact: Peter Hoff
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Please note: If you have an event you want promoted, contact the office.



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ENERGY UTILITIES BOARD IMPLEMENTS NEW FLARING GUIDELINES

On January 1, 2000, the EUB implemented new requirements for upstream flaring that will lead to significant flaring reductions in Alberta. These requirements are detailed in the new EUB document, Guide 60: Upstream Petroleum Industry Flaring Guide.

Flaring reduction targets

This new guide affects all flaring in the province. For example, a solution gas flare reduction schedule calls for a 25 percent reduction from 1996 baseline solution gas flare volumes by the end of 2001. Solution gas is natural gas produced along with crude oil. While more than 94 percent of this gas is currently conserved in Alberta, there remain approximately 4400 solution gas flares, which account for some 75 percent of the province's flared gas volumes.

The guide also includes flare performance requirements aimed at improved combustion efficiency. These requirements will aid the petroleum industry in meeting Alberta Ambient Air Quality Guidelines. The industry must also evaluate all existing flares, with the goal of either eliminating them or reducing flaring volumes. Compliance deadlines for flare performance and evaluation are:

- January 1, 2000, for all new flares;
- December 31, 2002, for all existing solution gas flares;
- December 31, 2004, for all flares at other existing permanent facilities.

New public notification requirements:

The EUB also put into place significant public consultation and public notification requirements for flares at both new and existing solution gas batteries. Batteries process production from

one or more wells and are sites of solution gas flares.

Under the new requirements, operators must notify landowners or occupants living within 500 metres of each existing flare about the flare evaluation outcome and what the operator's intentions are for future operation of that flare. The operator must also provide an information package to each landowner or occupant. A conflict resolution process to address flaring concerns is also outlined in these requirements.

Performance reporting, review and updates:

EUB Guide 60 clarifies flaring and venting reporting requirements for all facilities and includes the implementation of an EUB-generated annual report on industry flaring performance. The EUB will also conduct a review of flaring and flaring practices in 2001. The review will ensure that flaring reduction remains on target in Alberta. It will also examine operating practices and new technology that could be applied to longer-term flare reduction targets.

The EUB has also posted an "Updates and Clarifications" to Guide 60 document on its Web site. This answers stakeholder questions and offers updates and interpretations of Guide 60 requirements. It will be updated as new issues arise and are resolved.

Guide 60 is available at no charge on the EUB Web site at www.eub.gov.ab.ca.

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AGRICULTURAL BIOTECHNOLOGY – CONT'D

(Continued from page 7)

The report serves to give us some insight into how ordinary citizens perceive biotechnology at this point in time, once they had learned considerably more about the issue. In the end the group have a vote of confidence to Canada's regulatory process, although they were left with more questions than answers. In the report, the jury conditionally concluded that biotechnology is a safe technology, it is beneficial for all of society, and it can respect the individuality of humankind. The jury also stated that the above is true only if citizens make it so and if biotechnology belongs to everyone.

Of the 16 recommendations delivered by the jury two dealt with international trade. First, the citizens recommended that international harmonization of bio-safety standards and legislation should be supported in a process which respects individual countries' cultures and ethics. Secondly, the new Canadian Biotechnology Advisory Committee must develop and implement effective labeling policy.

In a presentation at the Canadian International Grains Institute Biotechnology Seminar on October 19, 1999, Canadian Wheat Board President Greg Arason stated that every one of the CWB's Italian customers has said they will not import transgenic durum until there was clear consumer acceptance. The Italians estimate this will happen sometime toward 2008. Warburtons Bakery in the UK indicated to the CWB that they would expect Canada to provide wheat that is not transgenic. Arason added that a number of Japanese companies are either removing transgenic commodities from their products, or refusing to accept them in the first place. He also said that there are indications that the malting industry will not accept transgenic malting barley anywhere except China.

Although transgenic varieties of wheat and barley are not expected for widespread production until 2003, the Wheat Board is trying to protect these markets by investing \$1.5 million over the next three years to develop a system to identify non-GM wheat. The CWB is banking on Rapid Instrumental Objective Testing (RIOT) technology to accomplish this feat, a technology which has been investigated by the Canadian Grain Commission for years. So far the technology has not been successful in quickly identifying varieties. The problem is exacerbated by the fact that the European Union is suggesting that the tolerance for GM crops be one percent or less. Greg Arason fully acknowledged this when he stated that the process will not be cheap or easy.

The citizen's jury who took part in the University of Calgary conference also recommended that "public interest should be stimulated via a comprehensive public communications plan." Such a plan would undoubtedly ease the fear and anxiety consumers feel about a relatively obscure and mysterious technol-

ogy, and perhaps even change some opinions which have been formed in the present vacuum of credible and unbiased information. It should be implemented to speed up the process of consumer acceptance, but even if it actually happens, which is uncertain because these are only recommendations, the process will still take time. During that time, premium export markets could shrink or disappear. The Canadian Wheat Board is taking a calculated risk that the government does not have the political will to undertake such a plan, and that consumer acceptance will take much longer than it will for RIOT technology to be developed.

In the end, consumer acceptance supercedes all benefits of agricultural biotechnology, agronomic or otherwise, even if this lack of acceptance is currently based on rather uninformed opinions. It does not matter how great the agronomic benefits of the technology turn out to be if you do not have the customers to purchase your product. The market signals are as clear as the citizens' jury support of accommodating the preferences of foreign markets.

Although it may be a bitter pill to swallow at times like this, the customer is always right.

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT

JANUARY 2000

BY NEIL WAGSTAFF

Wild Rose has now existed as Alberta's General Farm organization for 4 years. Even after 4 years many farmers unfortunately still do not know what Wild Rose is, or what it does. Despite this, Wild Rose has gained outstanding recognition from government, politicians, media and the Ag Industry; as the organization that represents the best interests of all farmers and ranchers in Alberta.

During the past year your Board of Directors has been very busy. I will now highlight some of the activities, and initiatives, which your organization was involved with during the past year.

Farm Income Crisis & Safety Nets

The Farm Income situation has been a high priority during the past year. Board members have had numerous meetings with officials regarding farm income concerns. Board members have met with Provincial and Federal Ministers of Agriculture; Provincial and Federal Standing Committees on Agriculture; Provincial and Federal Cabinet Ministers; Members of Parliament and Members of the Legislature (both governing and opposition); Senators; and many senior Public Servants.

In late Feb. Wild Rose made a presentation to Board Members and senior management of the Agriculture Financial Services Corp. (AFSC). Suggestions and concerns on lending policies, crop insurance and FIDP were discussed.

Wild Rose is a member of the **Alberta Safety Net Coalition**. This group advises both levels of government on Crop Insurance, NISA and FIDP policy. Unfortunately we have become somewhat disillusioned with the effectiveness of this group to provide leadership for safety net changes.

Wild Rose has been critical of the **Farm Income Disaster Program (FIDP)** since it was first developed. Changes

were made to FIDP this fall, some of which were advocated by Wild Rose. Although we know that some producers have received benefit from FIDP, we still feel that this program has many shortcomings and does not adequately provide the level of insurance that many farmer operations need.

Crop Insurance has become inadequate for many farm operations as well and we were encouraged when the Minister of Agriculture recently announced that a complete review of Crop Insurance is to take place early in 2000. We are looking forward to participating in this review.

We have also been involved with the **National Safety Net Committee**. Alan Holt has attended some meetings. Terry Lee Degenhardt from Hughenden is a member of the National Safety Net Committee through her involvement with CFA and the National NISA Committee. She has attended a lot of meetings in the past few months and we have relied upon her to represent our interests at this level.

We can only hope that the concerns we have expressed and the possible solutions we have provided will be soon heeded.

Grain Handling and Transportation

Wild Rose urged the federal government to get all interested parties together to discuss the possible improvements proposed by Justice Estey's report on Grain Handling and Transportation. The result was the Kroeger review which was given a mandate to propose a constructive process for improving the grain handling and transportation system.

Wild Rose was selected as one of the Farm Organizations to be represented on Authur Kroeger's steering committee. From the outset it was recognized that this would require a considerable time commitment. After significant consideration, it was decided to have our Executive Director, Rod Scarlett, to sit at the steering

committee table on our behalf. Rod took on this task with zest and Wild Rose to a great extent became a mediator of sorts with all the varied opinions that had come to this committee.

Wild Rose was also asked to provide someone to sit on the Rates and Revenues Committee. We wanted to find someone with some experience in this area and Gordon Smillie was approached to represent Wild Rose. Gordon, who operates a good sized grain farm in SE Alberta, somehow found time to spend two to three days a week all summer long diligently working on this matter and needs to be commended for his dedication.

Although we were somewhat disappointed with Kroeger's report, the work undertaken will have a significant impact on transportation and grain handling policies for years to come.

Affiliations with other Farm Organizations in Canada

Our involvement with the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, farm income concerns and the grain transportation review; provided an opportunity for Wild Rose to become more active on a national level and to work with farm groups from other Provinces.

The four month Kroeger review of grain handling and transportation resulted in an alternative position paper being jointly developed by Keystone Agricultural Producers from Manitoba (KAP), Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM) and Wild Rose. This paper now referred to as "the Farmers' Position Paper" was released prior to Kroeger's report and has received considerable support. It outlined key points needed to structure an effective and efficient system that is accountable and that ensures producers receive the benefits of system improve-

BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT — CONT'D

ments.

In August of this year, an alliance was formed with Keystone Agricultural Producers, Agricore, and the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool to organize a campaign that would emphasize the need for financial relief for prairie grain producers. These four organizations met with the Minister of Agriculture Lyle Vanclief on September the 27th.

On November 24th, 25th & 26th Alan Holt accompanied Sinclair Harrison from SARM and Don Dewar from KAP, in Ottawa. They met with the Agricultural Standing Committee and recommended that they travel through Western Canada which they subsequently did. They also met with a number of other members of parliament, senators and senior bureaucrats. The purpose of their meetings was often two fold. They were hoping to develop a better understanding of the farm income situation on the Prairies and were seeking support for the Farmers' Position Paper on Grain Transportation and Handling.

Membership Growth

The membership of Wild Rose is very widespread and diverse, both by geography and by commodity. Nearly every community in Alberta has a Wild Rose member! Nearly every agricultural commodity that you can imagine has a producer who is a Wild Rose member. Even though we continue to get new members at a slow pace our membership has not increased much in the past year. We lose members at about the same rate as we get new members. This is mainly due to retirement or deaths.

Some Disappointments and Areas of Concern

Before I go on to other activities and accomplishments of the past year, I cannot help but address some disappointments the Board of directors has had during the past year.

- **Limited Financial Resources**

On more than one occasion, the executive has had to decide not to attend meetings with officials who have influence over farm policy decisions. Your Board of Directors has been frustrated when we felt we should have had representation at meetings in Central Canada but found it necessary to not go because of a shortage of financial resources.

Many of the decisions being made regarding Safety Nets are made in Ottawa. CFA often meets in Ottawa or in other major centers in Eastern Canada. Wheat Board and Grain Company affairs are usually dealt with in Winnipeg. Air fare, especially on short notice, and hotel rooms are very expensive. One trip to Ottawa can easily cost \$3000!

We have had to beg for assistance from government and industry in order to have representation at some of the meetings which we have attended in the past year!

Greater financial resources would also allow Wild Rose to: increase its activities on a number of issues; undertake more research and policy development; and improve communications with its members. The reality is that Wild Rose depends on membership for a large portion of its finances and the only way financial resources can be improved is to have more members.

The Board has struggled with what can be done to increase membership. If Wild Rose is to continue to be a strong general farm organization, membership must be expanded for credibility and financial reasons.

Current supporters of Wild Rose can no longer continue to be complacent when it comes to recruiting new members.

- **Farmer Apathy**

Producers need to be more involved in decisions that affect our industry. There seems to be a prevailing attitude to let someone else do this type of work. Producers need to get more involved in farm organizations and to take charge of where their organizations are going.

- **Properly representing our Membership**

An ongoing challenge for the Board is how to get adequate input and feedback from producers on emerging issues, often on short notice.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT — CONT'D

On to other Activities:

Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA)

CFA is a significant agricultural lobby and policy developer at the federal level. It is important that Alberta farmers are represented in Ottawa. Wild Rose is fortunate that CFA has given them a special condition under which they can be a member of CFA. As an Associate Member, Wild Rose is entitled to send delegates to the annual and summer meetings of CFA, have policy input, and receive current information on national issues. Alan Holt and Neil Wagstaff attended the CFA annual and mid-summer meetings.

Research Project

Wild Rose received a grant from PFRA to begin an economic viability study regarding manure management. We in turn have contracted the services of a University graduate student to do this work. It is hoped that this will identify some economic conservation and stewardship practices that can be adopted by Producers.

Canadian Grain Commission

Wild Rose was consulted in their program review several times. Discussions included such things as the need for increased public funding for their services, inland inspections and possible restructuring of their governance.

Energy Utilities Board

Wild Rose was selected by the Energy Utilities Board to participate in a steering committee to develop an alternative dispute resolution process.

Canadian Wheat Board

Wild Rose has been consulted regarding proposed marketing options and the possible need for contingency fund regulations.

Ag Forum - We continue to participate in the Ag Forum, which meets about four times per year, with as many as 16 other organizations attending.

Public policy development

Monitoring the legislative process and providing input on:

- Intensive livestock regulations
- farm assessment and taxation
- slip tanks/dangerous goods transport
- registration of water wells

- unemployment insurance for off farm income
- international trade issues
- carbon sequestering/sinks
- farm safety
- endangered species

Services performed:

Agriculture Input Monitoring (AIMS) contract

Wild Rose has continued its contract with the provincial government where we gather statistical information regarding farm input costs at 18 locations across the province. This information is available on the web.

Accounting Services

Wild Rose has continued to provide income-tax service at a reasonable rate to its members. NISA and FIDP applications have also been prepared for members for a fee.

Other Services

The Board has often wondered what other services we could realistically provide. If you have any suggestions to consider please let us know.

Representation on Other Organizations

Wild Rose is involved with the following organizations on an ongoing basis:

- **The Co-operators Insurance Group – 2 delegates**
- **AFAC (Alberta Farm Animal Care Association) – 1 Board Member**
- **Western Grains Research Foundation – 1 Board Member**
- **CASA (Clean Air Strategic Alliance) – 1 Member**
- **AAMD&C (Alberta Assoc. of Municipal Districts & Counties) – Fraternal Membership**
- **Alberta Surface Rights Federation - representative**
- **Hopper Car Ownership Committee (Farmer Rail Car Coalition) – representative**
- **Land Agents Advisory Committee**

BOARD OF DIRECTORS REPORT — CONT'D

Information and Learning

- **CIGI Courses** – Wild Rose was again asked to refer farmers for participation in a week long course on the Canadian Grain Industry put on by the Canadian International Grains Institute.
- **Internet Web Site** - We are on the Internet at:
email address is: wrap@planet.eon.net
- **Newsletters** - Wild Rose News was published quarterly
- **Press Releases** – were issued on many matters during the year
- **Media Interviews** - When agricultural issues arise, Wild Rose is usually contacted because we are involved in all aspects of agriculture. Members of the Board, Regional Directors and staff have conducted numerous news media interviews throughout the year.

All this has been done on a budget of about \$135,000 and with a staff of only two people. Our staff are obviously very dedicated to our organization, and for this we owe them a great amount of thanks.

YES! I wish to join Wild Rose Agricultural Producers



Name: _____

Spouse: _____

Address: _____

Town: _____

Postal Code: _____ Telephone: _____ Fax: _____

I enclose - Membership fee :	Producer	\$ _____	(\$107.00)
	3 - Year	\$ _____	(\$288.90)
	Associate	\$ _____	(\$ 53.50)

Wild Rose Agricultural Producers, 14815 - 119 Avenue, Edmonton, AB, T5L 4W2

Telephone: 780-451-5912 Fax: 780-453-2669 e-mail: wrap@planet.eon.net

INSURE YOUR BUSINESS' FUTURE WITH WORKERS' COMPENSATION COVERAGE

Fire, hail or other crop losses can jeopardize the financial health of a farm business. Although risk and agriculture go hand in hand, more farm owners take steps to manage their risk by investing in crop insurance.

For many, however, going without insurance coverage for themselves and their employees is a risk they seem willing to take. "Although work-related accidents in the agriculture industry can be very serious, many agriculture businesses have not invested in a disability insurance program for their employees," notes Bob Nebo, WCB director of Employer Services.

While most industrial sectors in Alberta are required to carry workers' compensation insurance, most farming operations can choose whether or not to purchase WCB insurance coverage. There are several benefits to workers' compensation insurance. "One of the most important features for employers is protection from costly legal action should an employee be injured on the job," notes Nebo. "When you combine that benefit with the low premium rates available to agricultural businesses, the WCB offers a very attractive package."

Workers' Compensation Insurance also provides compensation and benefits to employees who have job-related injuries or illnesses. Benefits include replacement of lost income, health care and vocational rehabilitation services as well as medical supplies and prescriptions. The WCB benefit package is typically more comprehensive than similar plans offered by private insurers.

Personal coverage is also available to farm owners, whether or not they employ workers, and to directors of agricultural corporations, boards and commissions. Personal coverage offers the same range of comprehensive benefits and provides the opportunity to select the amount of coverage that is right for the individual.

For more information about WCB workplace compensation coverage or personal coverage, please visit the WCB's website at www.wcb.ab.ca or call 310-0000 and dial 780 498-3999 to speak with a customer service representative in the WCB Employer Services Department.

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AG SUMMIT 2000 – UPDATE

A process called Ag Summit 2000 began on February 7 and 8 in Red Deer with a two-day Leaders' Workshop. The Workshop identified some extremely broad issues that are to be discussed at upcoming Regional Meetings. It would seem to be imperative that you attend one of these meetings to voice your opinions on the future of agriculture in this province. The meeting locations are:

Olds, March 8
Taber, March 9
Vermilion, March 15
Stettler, March 16
Wetaskiwin, March 17
Westlock, March 20
Grande Prairie, March 22
Peace River, March 23

These Regional meetings will provide input for short and long term policy directions for the Government of Alberta.

GRAIN HANDLING AND TRANSPORTATION UPDATE

As of the writing of this newsletter, the Federal government has not made a decision regarding the future of grain handling and transportation in western Canada. Wild Rose, in conjunction with Keystone Agricultural Producers and the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities continue to work together in striving to reach a resolution that gives the best possible return to producers.

In this regard, it is unfortunate that the Province of Alberta, and a few other farm organizations have once again reaffirmed their support of the Kroeger recommendations, recommendations whose highlights include; no immediate competitive features to be adopted into the rail system until the completion of another review (and even then there are no guarantees) ; a revenue cap that will leave over \$500 million more of producers money in the hands of railways when compared to our recommendation; and; the compulsory removal of the CWB from the transportation logistics system, this despite the fact there is no documentation or even comparative analysis that shows producers will benefit, and no chance of stopping if it does not work.

Wild Rose believes that there are solutions to the problems that surround this issue and simply reciting rhetoric does not solve any of the issues.

DID YOU KNOW ...

- ◆ In 1998 Alberta's contribution to the GDP was \$2.7 billion or 21% versus \$3.3 billion or 26% for Ontario.
- ◆ A 454 g loaf of bread costs about \$1.00 and is made from 500 g of red spring wheat comprising about 60-65% of the total ingredients and worth about \$0.06.
- ◆ There were 59,007 farms in Alberta in 1996, a 30% decrease from 1951.
- ◆ Between 50 and 60% of government expenditures on agriculture in Alberta have been federal expenditures
- ◆ In 1955, provincial average yields for wheat, barley, and canola were 23.3, 27.0 and 11.2 bushels per acre. This compares with average 1999 yields of 42.1, 65.5 and 29.0 bushels per acre, respectively.
- ◆ Over 70% of the farms in Alberta reported gross sales of under \$100,000 in 1995.
- ◆ The average farm size was 881 acres in 1996, compared to 527 acres in 1951.
- ◆ Net farm income accounted for 21% of an average farm operator's total income in 1995. The other 79% was from off-farm employment and other sources of income.
- ◆ Since the late 1980's, Alberta's total farm debt has been the highest of any province in Canada.
- ◆ Alberta agri-food exports for the first 9 months of 1999 were \$3.3 billion, down 12% from the corresponding 1998 value. However, exports of value added products rose by 13%.
- ◆ About 50% of Alberta primary agriculture production (measured by value of farm market receipts) is exported to other countries.
- ◆ Alberta's food processing industries are dominated by meat and meat processing activity (excluding poultry) which in 1998 accounted for just over one half of total food products shipped.
- ◆ Alberta's agri-food sector employed 101,500 person in 1999 or almost 7% of the total provincial workforce. Employment in agriculture dropped 9.9% to 82,500 in 1999, the lowest level in the past decade, while employment in food and beverage industries fell 6.9% to 19,000.

FARMING – THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE
EXCERPTS OF 1ST VICE PRESIDENT KEITH DEGENHARDT’S PRESENTATION
TO THE SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2000

What draws me here today is the concern that without attention to the present situation in farming, there may not be a future for farmers. Less than 4% of the Canadian population is farming, yet there are 1 in 7 jobs dependent on the food industry. Agriculture is food. Canadians eat and the world eats.

Three million people live in Alberta. 17% of our 3 million people live in rural areas, and are dependent on agriculture directly. Because of our low population density, 80% of the food we produce is exported, thereby contributing to a favorable balance of trade in Canada. In Alberta, with some key investments in infrastructure, and some subtle policy shifts, giving **incentives** (and let me emphasize the word “incentives”) to farmers, a vibrant cattle industry was developed. The other livestock sectors have also grown, and with this slight increase in demand there has been shifts in grain production patterns. Farmers are willing to change. But with all this the average income in Alberta for farmers is \$36,000. **65% of this income comes from off-farm income.** Alberta is often considered a shining light as far as its economy is concern. And in the eyes of its politicians it is said to have a viable strong farm economy. Yet our farmers earn only \$12,600 from farming and \$23,400 from off farm jobs. Farmers are producing more, at less cost and yet are taking home less money.

Why, with all these efficiency improvements farmers have made, and investment both by governments and the agri-food industry is agriculture in dire straits? Simply put, we are an exporter of food. With the influence of the U.S. and E.U. standing and pounding their chests, and distorting the world grain prices, grain prices are ridiculously low. Until the U.S. and E.U. figure out ways to support their farmers without distorting the price of farm products, it appears the price is not going to change unless there is shortage caused by a weather disaster. In the immediate crisis, what steps can be taken to help farmers live through the crunch? Wild Rose Agricultural Producers has some suggestion.

- 1) The growing dependence on off-farm income exists. Including the off-farm income as part of the farm income is wrong. Do statisticians include income from second jobs as part of the income of any other business?
- 2) At present, before a farmer is considered eligible for employment insurance, 15% of the gross farm receipt are subtracted from his EI check. Our margins are nowhere near 15% of gross. Agriculture Agri-food Canada and CFA studies have found that even 5% of gross receipts are high. We would strongly encourage your support for a change in this policy, from 15% to 5% of gross farm receipts.
- 3) Transportation issue. There is desire to change the freight structure for grains and oilseeds to a more accountable and commercial system. The premise is laudable and we always want to see improvements. The grain handlers and the railways were part of the Kroeger effort. WRAP, KAP & SARM with support from other industry players, developed a position which is the most producer friendly.
- 4) Farm Safety Nets

We support and need the farm safety net programs. Farmers do business in a world market place. Not only is the price we receive for our product based on world prices which is influenced downward by export subsidies, but the costs of our inputs are inflated upwards because of high domestic support in the U.S. and E.U. One of the comments made is that if the safety net package is improved and predictable, its value will be capitalized into land and equipment. That capitalization has already occurred, yet Canadian farmers have not the money to compete in their own nation. Because most of our equipment is manufactured in the U.S., and sold on the North American market, U.S. farm aid programs have already been capitalized into its cost. The European Union’s domestic support programs have been capitalized into very high land values. It only takes a few European buyers to raise expectation for land values in Canada, and thereby capitalizing European support prices into cost of land in Canada. Our farm safety nets were designed for a situation where farmers were receiving an acceptable return of investment, but where margins were expected to be at least 15% of gross farm receipts, not less than 5% and decreasing. We, as farmers recognize and fully support other priorities for spending, especially health and education. But if we are to remain in these communities we have to survive so that we are there for the day we will again thrive.

Our goal in Wild Rose Ag Producers is to lobby for an environment that allows for thriving rural communities, supported and made strong by people making and enjoying their living on family farms, in healthy relationships with each other, the community, and the earth. Farmers **are** looking after the land. They have already contributed to greater carbon sequestration, thereby reducing the greenhouse gas effect, by adoption of minimum till and zero till. Wild Rose believes that with some long term policy shifts, and the education of the public about the importance of agriculture – **the many roles farmers fulfill** – the urban population will ensure that their goals of a healthy environment and quality food are also met. Agriculture is multi-functional, and vitally important to Canada. It is commonly stated in the agricultural communities if there is another year like the past one there will not be another- the pin will be pulled! Our goal with your support is to ensure this does not happen.

WILD ROSE AGRICULTURAL PRODUCERS DIRECTORY OF OFFICIALS

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