



ALBERTA

AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

*Office of the Minister
MLA, Drumheller-Stettler*

APR 27 2022

Mr. Sebastian Dutrisac
Chair, Agriculture Service Board Provincial Committee
#101, 1101 5th St.
Nisku, Alberta T9E 2X3
Email: asbprovcommittee@gmail.com

Dear Mr. Dutrisac:

Thank you for your February 1, 2022, letter to bring to my attention the two resolutions passed at the 2022 provincial Agriculture Service Board (ASB) conference.

Last spring, Agriculture Forestry and Rural Economic Development (AFRED) provided responses to the ASB on a number of resolutions, including the following resolutions you provided my office:

- Resolution 2-22: Restoration of Alberta Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development Regional Network of Experts.
- Resolution 5-22: Exemption of Natural Gas and Propane for Agriculture Under the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act.

Enclosed are the official AFRED ministry responses to these resolutions. Also enclosed is the official Ministry response from Transportation regarding Resolution 1-22: Vegetation Management on Alberta Provincial Highways.

I understand that you have received responses from Honourable Adriana LaGrange, Minister of Education, and Honourable Jason Nixon, Minister of Environment and Parks, regarding resolutions 3-22: Celebrate Canada Agriculture Day in Alberta Schools, and 4-22: Properly Managing Ungulate Populations.

Mr. Dutrisac
Page Two

Thank you again for bringing these issues to my attention and for sharing the resolutions provided to my colleagues at the Alberta Ministries of Transportation, Education, Environment and Parks, and the Government of Canada.

Sincerely,



Honourable Nate Horner
Minister, Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development

Enclosure

cc: Honourable Rajan Sawhney, Minister of Transportation
John Conrad, Assistant Deputy Minister, Primary Agriculture Division

Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development
ASB Resolution Responses

Resolution 2-22: Restoration of Alberta Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development Regional Network of Experts

Response:

Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development (AFRED) no longer provides one-on-one technical agronomic information to producers. The Ministry now focuses on providing services to producers that is related to programs, policy and legislation.

The Ag-Info Centre (AIC) formerly had technical agronomic specialist support in beef and forage, crops, horticulture, and farm management. These inquiries are now referred to the many resources available from industry organizations and private services. The AIC has transitioned from being the first point of contact for agricultural information and resources to being the first point of contact for department programs.

Results Driven Agriculture Research (RDAR) is exploring this extension gap and serving as a catalyst to bring together a committee, comprised of a cross section of industry members to develop a cooperative extension model for Alberta. Meyers Norris Penny (MNP) was contracted through a competitive process to work in collaboration with the committee to facilitate a guided approach to evaluate the current state of extension in Alberta. It is looking to identify gaps, examine other jurisdictional systems and make recommendations on an improved cooperative extension model for the future. The project will provide recommendations by June 2022. Industry engagement will play a pivotal role in the formulation of committee recommendations.

The department has launched new programming in 2021 to support ASBs. We now have an ASB Regional Liaison program which links fieldmen and ASB members with an assigned staff who are available to each region to provide program and policy information. In addition, an ASB-directed newsletter is shared with ASBs on a quarterly basis, along with a town hall meeting held bi-annually between ASB Chairmen and Assistant Deputy Minister John Conrad.

Resolution 5-22: Exemption of Natural Gas and Propane for Agriculture Under the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Pricing Act

Response:

Alberta has been clear on our opposition to the Government of Canada's climate strategy that includes increases in the carbon pricing to a rate of a \$170 per tonne of carbon dioxide equivalent by 2030. The exemption for on-farm gasoline and diesel is a start and has provided some relief for agricultural producers, however additional exemptions for propane and natural gas are required. The carbon price places significant economic stress on individual Albertans who have no choice but to heat their homes each winter and dry their grain when conditions require.

As for an update on federal Bill C-206, it has not made it to 3rd reading and nothing has happened in regards to natural gas and propane ag exemption since. The Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development did meet in November with the Federal Agriculture Minister and continued to raise this concern. The minister indicated that a strong Canada needs a strong Alberta, and our governments must work together to reflect the priorities of Albertans in federal policies so that both Alberta and Canada thrive. Alberta will continue these discussions with the federal government in 2022.

There is some relief for farmers who use natural gas to operate grain dryers for instance. In these cases, the federal government has a refundable tax credit program. Though it does not provide a full exemption it does provide some relief. More information on this exemption can be found at: <https://budget.gc.ca/efu-meb/2021/report-rapport/EFU-MEB-2021-EN.pdf#page=91>.

Another program of interest is the Federal Agricultural Clean Technology Program. This program provides relief to farmers from the fuel surcharges for natural gas and propane. The program is currently accepting applications but only for funding activities starting as of April 1, 2022. More information can be found at <https://agriculture.canada.ca/en/agricultural-programs-and-services/agricultural-clean-technology-program-adoption-stream>.

Alberta Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Economic Development also offers two programs through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership. 1) The Farm Technology Program supports the adoption of innovative technology that minimizes agricultural waste, optimizes farm efficiency, and encourages the adoption of best management practices in farm security. You can find the details at https://cap.alberta.ca/CAP/program/PRGM_NAME_3. 2) The Efficient Grain Handling Program is an energy efficiency program to assist producers with reducing the overall energy use on their operations. The program will fund equipment that shows a significant energy efficiency improvement over standard practice. Those details can be found at <https://cap.alberta.ca/CAP/program/EGH>.

Resolution 1-22: *Vegetation Management on Alberta Provincial Highways*

Response:

The Government of Alberta understands the importance of vegetation management. We have needed to closely manage our highway maintenance funding over the past few years, which has impacted some summer maintenance activities, such as full right-of-way mowing. Alberta Transportation's goal is to balance funding challenges with the need for maintenance activities that relate to public safety, while still providing an acceptable overall level of service. As such, funding for vegetation management, including mowing, was mainly focused on safety-related concerns such as sight lines at intersections. However, we recognize the other benefits of mowing, such as improved drainage, improved visibility of wildlife, reduced risk of wildfire spread and controlling brush growth.

In order to ensure mowing and chemical weed control budgets are used in the best possible manner, Alberta Transportation is planning to conduct a program-level review of our vegetation management program to ensure its ongoing effectiveness. This effort will include development of a vegetation management plan framework; this framework will provide a consistent platform for an annual update regarding expected budgets, mowing frequency, herbicide application, innovations/trials, and stakeholder consultation/collaboration. The review is planned to begin in fall 2022.

Alberta Transportation is grateful for the assistance that the Agricultural Fieldmen of the various Agricultural Service Boards throughout the province have provided to date, with weed notices issued to Alberta Transportation's district offices being an effective driver for weed control action. This process allows for targeted mitigation at locations of the highest priority to the Agricultural Fieldmen and Albertans.