

Rural Development & Land Use

The Committee met on March 27, 2009.

High Speed Internet. The availability and price of high-speed internet in rural communities continues to be an area of interest for the committee. A background information paper will be brought forward to the committee outlining the service levels in rural areas and the committee will then bring this forward to the province to lobby with and encourage the use of federal funding for business development and infrastructure.

Innovation and Research. MAFRI Innovation and Research provided the committee with an update on the changes being introduced as we transition from APF to Growing Forward. There will be a greater focus on innovation and a focus on commercially viable research. More money will flow into research in general but KAP needs to ensure that regional research capacity is not lost to centralized research stations.

Flood Protection. The committee agreed to lobby for increased flood protection and will make considerations for various flood protection systems in the province.

RCMP. RCMP reported to the committee that staffing levels are considered adequate but the committee remains skeptical. Increased presence by officers and through crime prevention programs remains a priority area.

Rural Demographics. The committee would like to see the province work towards creating a better environment for business to grow in rural areas. This could include infrastructure such as improved roads, rail, and airport facilities outside of Winnipeg or a reduced tax structure for rural entrepreneurs.

Agri-Energy. The Agri-Energy Sub-Committee was established to deal specifically with the growing number of issues related to agriculture's role in the emerging renewable energy sector. The committee met with PAMI at their office in Portage to tour their facilities and discuss emerging issues that we can collaborate on. Included in these are: standards for biomass, specifically pellets; a proposal for a study on energy consumption on farm; and a project to assess the feasibility of creating N4H through wind energy in rural Manitoba. To date the committee has acted on the proposal on wind ammonia production and agreed, on condition, to fund \$2,000 of this \$20,000 project. The remaining \$18,000 is expected to come from various provincial grants. Presently, applications for grant money have been submitted by PAMI and the committee is waiting on their acceptance. The committee had the opportunity to meet with Mike Reese at Ag-Days in Brandon to discuss the research Morris University has done on the subject.

Committee Members. Doug Chorney (Chair), Hans Gorter, Carl Cunningham, Kyle Foster, Charlie Howatt, Mike Teillet, Dan Mazier, Ron Kalberg, Alan Ransom, Walter Finlay, Glen Franklin, Brian Chorney, David Shott, Gerald Qually, Wayne Digby, Nevin Bachmeier, Garth McTavish, Staff Resource: James Battershill.