

June 11, 2015

***The Saskatchewan Farm Security Act***

The Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM) thanks you for the opportunity to consult on amendments to *The Saskatchewan Farm Security Act (Act)*. As the voice for all 296 rural municipalities (RM) in Saskatchewan, SARM has a strong connection to rural economies with agriculture being one of the most widespread. This is not the first time farm ownership issues have come up in Saskatchewan. In the past SARM has been vocal on its position towards the Act and the sale of farm land.

In 2006 SARM actively opposed the relaxation of the legislation and regulations dealing with the sale of farmland in Saskatchewan. There were, and continue to be, organizations in favour of allowing pension funds to invest in Saskatchewan farmland. SARM took the position that farm land is for farmers who want to farm and live in rural Saskatchewan. Farming in Saskatchewan is not an investment but rather a way of life.

When agriculture producers choose to live and farm in rural Saskatchewan they contribute to more than just the local economies; these people contribute to also the vibrancy of the community. The farmers that live in rural Saskatchewan are a part of a community, they join and create social groups, their children attend rural schools and meaningful relationships are developed.

The Farm Land Security Board favoured SARM's position in 2006 by agreeing with the points above. SARM's position on this matter has not changed.

SARM does not take issue with allowing people born outside of Saskatchewan to own and work farmland in this province. Those new to Saskatchewan are welcome to own and operate farms in our province. It is the ownership of farmland by investment firms and pension fund investment firms that SARM opposes. The ownership of farmland by organizations such as those means that less farmland is available to residents of rural Saskatchewan to start new or expand current farming operations

Both SARM's June Division Meetings and monthly Board meetings will be held over the next few weeks; these will provide us with an ideal forum to interact with our members on this issue. We will be gathering our members' views and discussing the issues as a Board to ensure that our current position has not changed and that it accurately reflects the views in rural Saskatchewan and of our members. Any additional information received will result in a follow-up submission reflecting that new data.

SARM would also like to identify one issue with the current consultation process. The online consultation is available to any interested person or entity with an internet connection. It would be possible for a foreign organization to provide comments and skew the results by providing



multiple submissions. This is a Saskatchewan issue that is vital and should be discussed by the people of Saskatchewan. Furthermore, it is not a requirement of the consultation to have evidence supporting your position. One may simply select the available responses i.e. 'agree' or 'disagree' and submit the form. SARM believes that the consultation should be open to only those living in Saskatchewan or, at the very least, only open to Canadians.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and SARM looks forward to continuing to work with you on the Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ray ORB". The signature is written in a cursive style, with the first name "Ray" and the last name "ORB" in all caps.

Ray Orb  
President