



COMMENTARY

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For immediate release

April 11, 2011

Collaborating for Change

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Keystone Agricultural Producers has experienced much of its lobbying success in Manitoba using a "one message, one voice" strategy. We know we can achieve a great deal as farmers if we work in partnership with our 22 commodity group members to deliver our message. This is the reason KAP values opportunities to collaborate with other groups across Canada to work on shared objectives to address industry-wide issues.

We're working as part of stakeholder groups on issues such as the Federal Rail Costing Review and the National Food Strategy, and on provincial issues including removing education tax from property and changes to the Manitoba Farm Building Code.

KAP continues to partner with the other Prairie general farm organizations and the Canadian Federation of Agriculture in calling for a costing review of the revenue cap program. Calling on the experience and expertise of this diverse group of individuals with a long history of challenging the railways allows us to put forward a better informed lobby position to government.

KAP has contributed to the work being done under the National Food Strategy and showing the importance of all members of the food chain—from producer right through to consumer. The objective of the National Food Strategy (NFS) is to "develop a mission and long-term strategy for the Canadian food system together with all players along the food chain from primary production, input, distributors, processors, retail and consumers." This is an industry led initiative which KAP contributed to as part of a group of over 25 industry representatives who participated in an initial Agri-Food Stakeholder Consultation in June 2010 to help develop the mission and objectives for the strategy.

KAP also represents Manitoba on the NFS Working Group which includes Food Processors of Canada, Food and Consumer Products of Canada, Syngenta, Conference Board of Canada, Alberta Food Processors Association, Canadian Fertilizer Institute, Prince Edward Island Federation of Agriculture, Ontario Federation of Agriculture, Canadian Sugar Beet Producers' Association, Union des Producteurs Agricoles (Québec), British Columbia Agriculture Council and Dairy Farmers of Canada. Working together with this group of stakeholders means that Manitoba farmers are sharing their expertise and values and providing input to produce a final NFS document which will be a plan to help guide policy and programs related to food.

With an impending provincial election, the issue of dealing with education funding and property taxes will become a focus point for KAP and other stakeholders. We're working

with various stakeholders as part of The Education Financing Coalition on the province wide campaign letspayfair.com. The campaign was launched in 2007 to call on the Manitoba Government to remove education tax from the property tax bill, and the Coalition continues to advocate for practical solutions. The Coalition itself consists of over 30 rural and urban based organizations and businesses.

Working on challenges such as the changes to the Manitoba Farm Building Code for large farm buildings is another example of how working as a team with our commodity groups serves farmers well. Through ongoing consultations with Christopher Jones, Fire Commissioner of Manitoba, we have seen tremendous cooperation and understanding to ensure the goals of code changes can be achieved in a practical and effective manner.

If you're a farmer who would like more insight into what KAP is doing for you and how we are working to build a better operating environment for all farmers in the province, please contact us at 204-697-1140 or through email at kap@kap.mb.ca.

Keystone Agricultural Producers is Manitoba's largest general farm policy organization, representing over 7,000 farm families and 22 commodity groups throughout the province. Our strength is our democratic structure, and our mission is to represent and promote the interests of the province's farm families.