



# NEWS RELEASE

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## “The Voice of Manitoba Farmers”

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**For immediate release**

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## Farmers Value Producer Car Loading Sites

**Winnipeg** – Keystone Agricultural Producers (KAP) is deeply concerned about news of Canadian National Railway’s (CN) decision to delist nine producer car loading sites in Manitoba. This is in addition to 24 sites in Saskatchewan and 19 in Alberta, for a total loss of 52 loading sites across the Prairies.

Railways are required to post a list on the internet of all sidings they make available for producer cars to be loaded at. A railway must only provide 60 days notice before being allowed to officially delist sidings and no longer offer service to them for loading producer cars. That 60 day notice period for the Prairie sidings ended on September 6, 2009.

“As transportation costs rise, we are seeing a movement toward shipping more and more producer cars and we need rail access,” said Robert McLean, KAP Vice President and Transportation Committee Chair. “Sixty days in the middle of our busiest time of the year doesn’t provide adequate time for farmers to organize and look at our options.”

CN has not reported on what their intentions are for the sidings, but it is possible that they could be removed and salvaged in the near future. The long term loss would be significant as rail sidings have substantial value to farmers who wish to ship producer cars, as well as to rural communities which hope to attract industry investment.

The limited notice regarding sidings and producer cars is in stark contrast with the legislated three-year discontinuance process involved if a railway wishes to discontinue service on a grain-dependent branch line. This three-year extended timeline and formal process gives producers and local governments the opportunity to assess the impact of the loss of the rail line. It also forces the railway to offer the line for sale and negotiate a reasonable price with an interested buyer.

KAP urges Federal Transport Minister John Baird and Transport Canada to intervene and ensure that the delisted sidings are not salvaged until this situation can be properly assessed. It is critical to wait until the federal rail service review is complete to ensure that all shippers wishing to utilize this infrastructure have access.

“As farmers we have a legislated right to load and ship producer cars and the service review should include an assessment of a railway’s ability to accommodate that need,” said McLean.

KAP understands that many of the sites in Manitoba have received limited use over the past two years, but our intention is to ensure that any farmers in the region have the time and resources they need to make their own assessment of whether or not these lines will have value for their community in the future--even if they are not profitable for CN at the present time.

The nine producer car loading sites in Manitoba include: Brandon, Elie, St. Lazare, Makaroff, Minitonas, Oakner, Plumas, Roblin and Sprague.

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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.