



# HISTORY

---

## “The Voice of Manitoba Farmers”

1-1313 Border St. ~ Winnipeg MB ~ R3H 0X4

ph: (204) 697-1109 ~ fax: (204) 697-1109

[kap@kap.mb.ca](mailto:kap@kap.mb.ca) ~ [www.kap.mb.ca](http://www.kap.mb.ca)

*"I invite all of the members here to go back to their districts and talk about what has been done here the past two days. Suggest to your farmer neighbors that we've established something that is new and unique and we're all willing to work together towards one thing and that's the betterment of agriculture. If we do that there is no reason in the world why we can't be the envy of all other provinces in Canada."*

~ First KAP president Jack Penner, January 15, 1985.

During the third week of October 1984, the Manitoba Farm Bureau (MFB) held its last meeting, approximately two years after members disagreed over how to handle the loss of the Crow Rate. In their last two motions, the MFB offered its best wishes to its successor, a fledgling general farm organization called Keystone Agricultural Producers, and thanked their employees for years of hard work and dedication.

Manitoba's new general farm lobby organization began one year earlier when the MFB formed an ad hoc Committee on Farm Organization Structure to address serious difficulties brought about by a stormy Crow debate and the subsequent loss of support from Manitoba Pool Elevators in 1982, and United Grain Growers in 1983. The MFB also faced reduced involvement of the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association due to funding problems.

Over the next few months, the Committee, chaired by Bert Hall and Earl Geddes, developed a proposal for new general farm organization and organized a series of 25 meetings throughout the province to consult directly with producers. These meetings took place from January 9 to January 20, 1984 and close to 1,400 farmers participated with 1,026 returning questionnaires designed for the rural meetings. Bert Hall was one of the co-chairs of the Committee on Farm Organization Structure, instrumental in forming KAP.

The need for a new farm lobby organization to represent agriculture on issues common to all, was overwhelmingly endorsed with almost 97 per cent in favor. The questionnaires also included sections on structure, funding, fee levels, and additional comments. Given a clear mandate from the grassroots level, the Committee on Farm Organization Structure prepared a report and proposal for a new farm organization which was submitted on March 6, 1984.

The ad hoc Committee set out to travel the province again in April 1984, as a second series of rural meetings was scheduled to seek support, funding and delegates for the yet unnamed organization. General Council representatives and twelve delegates at the local level are elected by the time the meetings are complete on April 19, 1984. At about this time, and also due to the

stormy Crow debate, the Saskatchewan Federation of Agriculture collapsed after representing farmers for 40 years. The decision was brought about by group members' resistance to contribute funds, the continued withdrawal of members, and the failure of support for a restructuring proposal. Alberta's farm organization, Unifarm, was facing its own difficulties at the time for much the same reasons. They eventually evolved into their present form as Wild Rose Agricultural Producers and Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan.

By April 24, 1984, the new Manitoba farm organization had 400 paid members. Eight days later, membership exceeds 500 with a reported 6 to 16 memberships arriving in the mail daily. The first General Council meeting took place on June 15, 1984 and by noon the yet unnamed farm organization was no longer unnamed. Out of ten possible choices, delegates decided on Keystone Agricultural Producers. Rather than elect a president and executive, an executive committee was chosen consisting of 16 members (one from each of the twelve districts, and one from each of four commodity group members).

The new group took its first few cautious steps toward autonomy after the meeting as the KAP executive met to form committee to draft a constitution, by-laws and deal with the organization's finances. In late September, KAP General Council met again where the constitution and structure was changed slightly and adopted. For the first time, KAP began to seriously discuss policy, passing four resolutions recommended by the executive committee.

Comfortable that their successor was healthy enough to stand alone and there would not be a farm lobby vacuum in the province, the MFB handed over the reins to KAP almost one full month later. The MFB then closed shop permanently.

January of the following year, 1985, was a historic month for producers in Manitoba. Keystone Agricultural Producers held its first Annual General Meeting in Winnipeg where funding and membership were the top priorities. During the two day meeting, over 50 resolutions were discussed, Jack Penner was elected president, Earl Geddes was elected first vice-president, and Cam Henry was elected second vice-president.