

The KAP Alert

April 25, 2008

Farmers, Nutrients & The City

An Editorial by KAP President Ian Wishart

After being quoted in the *Winnipeg Free Press* last week in an article about a city councillor complaining about treating their wastewater while we as farmers are still using fertilizers, I received a lot of phone calls from farmers across Manitoba. They all wanted me to give a more complete response to the councillor's charges against agriculture, including that "the province isn't stopping farmers from using nitrogen."

The reason for not stopping farmers from using nitrogen is because it's an essential part of the crop growth cycle, along with phosphorus and other nutrients. Our fertilizers – whether chemical or organic – are applied to the land at the optimal rate for plant growth and yields. The vast majority of the nutrients that we apply are used by the plants, and never travel beyond the field because they're removed in the crops we harvest.

On my farm, I test my soils on a regular basis to make sure that we're using the right amount of nutrients for the crops we grow – and I know that the vast majority of farmers in Manitoba are good land and nutrient managers.

We continue to do a better job by implementing new farming techniques and applied technology as they become available. Some of this is done in a cost-sharing agreement with governments (just like the City of Winnipeg) but the majority are done completely at the farmers' own expense.

Compare this with the City of Winnipeg's nutrient management plan. An article by reporter Bartley Kives (*How it works: Winnipeg's wastewater system*, February 2, 2008) noted that the City discharges untreated wastewater into the city's rivers 16 to 18 times over an average year. Even with the upgrades that the city councillor is

talking about, they're still expecting to dump wastewater four times a year.

And just to clarify the whole picture: The Lake Winnipeg Stewardship Board's final report notes that all of agriculture contributes about 5% of the nitrogen in Lake Winnipeg and about 15% of the phosphorus. The City of Winnipeg contributes 4% of nitrogen and 5% of phosphorus. Considering that farmers manage 87% of Manitoba's landscape, agriculture's contribution to nitrogen levels is relatively small, mainly because our best management practices and government regulations have traditionally focused only on this nutrient. With the new focus on phosphorus – and with some appropriate support from government – I am confident that farmers will make significant reduction in our phosphorus contributions as well.

If you think that farmers are tired of being told that we're always the culprit when it comes to water quality, you're absolutely right. When we were asked to manage nitrogen levels, we did our best to do so. Now that phosphorus management is added to the mix, we've always said that we'll do our part with appropriate supports – after all, even the City of Winnipeg's plan will be cost-shared among all taxpayers.

Cover Crop Deadline Extended

The deadline to apply for the 2007 Cover Crop Protection Program has been extended to June 30, 2008. All producers that were unable to seed a crop due to spring flooding are eligible to apply.

For more information about the program & eligibility, call AAFC at 1-800-667-8567.

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KAP Predicts Another Record Year for Railways

April 25, 2008 News Release

KAP is appalled that the railway revenue cap for grain transportation will be increasing another 8% in the upcoming crop year. After years of making profits on the backs of farmers, this revenue cap increase will only make the transfer of money from the farm to rail shareholder pockets happen more quickly.

“Studies have shown that the railways are already making tens of millions of dollars in excess revenue from shipping our grain,” says KAP President Ian Wishart. “It’s unbelievable that they’ve been given a license to increase the burden on farmers again, well beyond the level of inflation.”

As part of the revenue cap, the increased fuel and labour costs should be minimized by the simple fact that the revenue cap is based on fuel and labour costs from 1992. While actual fuel and wages have increased, they have been counter-acted by more efficient locomotives, fewer kilometers of track, and a significantly

reduced work force. However, the current revenue cap formula does not allow for any of these efficiencies to be passed back to farmers in the way of lower costs.

KAP continues to call on the federal government to launch a full costing review so that all stakeholders, including farmers, can get a better handle on the railways’ actual current costs are for shipping grain. Farmers are not asking for increasing regulation in the transportation system, but are calling for the information in the current formula to be updated.

“Only a full costing review will help to bring transparency and accountability back into grain transportation,” says Wishart. “Farmers cannot continue to be slowly bled through a revenue cap formula that puts the advantage squarely in the railways’ court. We need an efficient, competitive railway system to get our products to market on time and in a cost-effective manner.”

ALUS Means Farmers are Growing a Better PEI

April 25, 2008 News Release from KAP & the CFA

The announcement of a province-wide Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) program in Prince Edward Island is an important milestone for farmers and landowners who are committed to growing a better environment. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA) and Keystone Agricultural Producers (KAP) would like to congratulate the ALUS team in PEI for moving forward with this historic announcement.

“This is the first province-wide ALUS program in Canada, and we want to celebrate this important event,” says KAP President Ian Wishart. “It’s really exciting to have watched ALUS grow from an idea to a proposal that was supported by farmers and conservationists across the country, and now to a full-scale provincial program.”

PEI has recognized that farmers can go above and beyond for the environment, in a way that no other group of citizens can. ALUS will provide incentives to farmers who maintain and enhance the environmental goods and services that exist on their land – things like riparian areas, waterfowl and wildlife habitat, clean water, flood control, and carbon sequestration. Farm-

ers will be paid for these services through financial payments, tax credits, and other incentives.

“Farmers from across the country are ready, willing, and able to be the leaders in environmental stewardship,” says CFA President Bob Friesen. “In response, the government of Prince Edward Island has made a strong commitment to farmers. Through ALUS, they’ve created a tool for farmers that will help them to excel in providing real environmental benefits to their province.”

CFA and KAP remain committed to working with the PEI Federation of Agriculture, and other partners in PEI and across Canada to create a national ALUS program. A pilot project in Manitoba is currently entering its third year, and was recently expanded in an Ontario county. ALUS projects have also been proposed in Alberta and Saskatchewan.

ALUS was originally developed by KAP and Delta Waterfowl in an agricultural and conservation partnership that continues to help guide ALUS as it grows across the country.

Oil Recycling Program Needs You

KAP's Inputs Committee recently met with the Manitoba Association for Resource Recovery Corp. (MARRC) to talk about their goal of recycling used oil and products... Here is the message they'd like to share with producers:

The recovery of used oil, used oil filters and used oil containers continues to be on the rise. Generators throughout the province have taken a very responsible approach with the used oil products recycling program.

With regards to used oil, we are working to achieve a better handle on the amount of oil that is "lost in service" (i.e. burned during the normal use of equipment).

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

MARRC is asking for some volunteers who may have information about how much oil they purchase, and how much is taken out when doing an oil change. Ideally, we'd like to get some information from grains, special crops & livestock producers with various sizes of operations.

If you are willing to help provide some better information about oil use in agriculture, please contact Ron Benson at MARRC at marro@mts.net or (204) 632-5255. For more info, go to usedoilrecycling.com.

KAP Activity Report

Tuesday, April 22

KAP's Transportation Committee met via conference to discuss their response to the proposed terms of reference for the level of service review that is being conducted by Transport Canada.

President Wishart & GM Yvonne Rideout met with representatives from Federated Co-operatives Ltd to discuss biofuels and other issues.

Wednesday, April 23

President Wishart was in Ottawa for CFA's board and committee meetings, which ran for two days.

Friday, April 25

VP Robert McLean & Communications Officer Lenore Kowalchuk participated in a conference call regarding the level of service review with members of the Farmer Rail Car Coalition. President Wishart & GM Rideout met with provincial representatives to discuss climate change issues and greenhouse gas reductions.

Crops In Class Launched by AITC-M

An exciting partnership has been developed between Agriculture in the Classroom - Manitoba (AITC-M) and a group of community minded farmers in the Selkirk area to offer a new program called **Crops in Class**. This program is a unique combination of agriculture education and community philanthropy. On April 22nd, 2008 the program was launched to Grade 5 students at East Selkirk Middle School.

The Crops in Class program brings together hands-on education with a fundraising project led by a group of local farmers. Spring will see these farmers donating their land, time and ma-

chinery to plant a crop specifically for the students. As the crop grows, they will be following along with several curriculum-specific activities that will help them learn about agriculture and where their food comes from.

In addition to the land, time and equipment use being donated by local farmers many of the inputs are also being donated by generous agriculture companies across the industry. Overall, this project is an excellent example of how the agricultural community can pull together to educate today's youth and support local projects.

For more info, contact AITC-M at 1-866-487-4029 or go to www.aitc.mb.ca.