

Keystone Agricultural Producers



Bill 12

The Highways and Transportation Amendment Act

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Presented by:

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The Voice of Manitoba Farmers

On behalf of Keystone Agricultural Producers (KAP), I am pleased to share our organization's position with respect to Bill 12 – The Highways and Transportation Amendment Act. KAP is a democratically controlled general farm policy organization representing and promoting the interest of agricultural producers in Manitoba. Our membership consists of farmers and commodity groups throughout the province.

Bill 12 proposes to streamline the process for removing illegal signage and structures along highways as well as update penalty provisions under the act. Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives promotes diversification and value-added farm products. As an organization, we also support efforts within the industry that adds value and supplements traditional sources of farm income.

On-farm sales require promotion through signage posted on highways, whether it is product promotion signs or directional signage. Currently, vendor signage falls within internal Policy/Standard No. 100-F-4 under Manitoba Transportation & Government Services (Traffic Engineering). While the policy certainly serves a purpose for temporary vendors and related signage, we encourage government to allow for permanent on-farm sales and required signage. Direct marketing sometimes is required throughout most or all of the year.

We are not against the removal of signage that poses a traffic safety hazard and results in a clutter effect along highways. There have been past experiences of farm market signage being removed without the owner's knowledge. It appears that when someone complains about signage and asks for its removal, ownership is not taken into consideration. The complaint may have come from a business competitor and that is not a valid reason to remove signage. Enforcement officers must ensure that the complaint is legitimate from a traffic safety point of view before any signage is removed. The owner should be contacted and notified before removal unless the signage poses a serious traffic hazard.

Manitoba producers are being encouraged by MAFRI to pursue direct marketing as a way to diversify sales and improve production margins. On-farm sales require roadside advertising using signage to develop markets.

We would like the provincial government to, through this bill, encourage direct farm marketing and diversification by amending the Highway and Transportation Act to exempt agricultural producers from sign regulation notwithstanding minimum safety standards.

In closing, I would like to stress that farmers must not, in any way, be put at an unfair disadvantage as a result of this bill.

Thank you.