



COMMENTARY

“The Voice of Manitoba Farmers”

203-1700 Ellice Ave. ~ Winnipeg MB ~ R3H 0B1

ph: (204) 697-1140 ~ fax: (204) 697-1109

kap@kap.mb.ca ~ www.kap.mb.ca

Agri-Environment Must Top Budget List

January 4, 2008

By David Rolfe, KAP President. Cell: (204) 483-0502.

In December, KAP submitted its pre-budget document to Manitoba's Finance Minister. This is the first of four commentaries that focus on portions of the paper and areas that are important to Manitoba's farm families. The complete pre-budget submission is posted at www.kap.mb.ca/policy_briefs.htm

The interplay between agriculture and the environment continues to be under the spotlight in Manitoba. The province's farmers are being asked to do more for the environment, and to document the things they are doing that create benefits and improvements in the landscape. The successes of the environmental farm plan and the Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) pilot project have clearly shown that farmers are willing to step up to the plate and do their share if the right tools are in place.

It is critical that the next provincial budget builds on farmers' willingness to maintain and enhance our shared environment. There are two significant environmental issues on the horizon, and farmers must see a plan forming in the province's financial commitments.

The first issue is nutrient management. This process has been going on for quite some time, but KAP was able to bring government and agriculture together on a common draft regulation to protect water quality as well as the farmer's ability to continue to farm. One area that is still outstanding is the incentive program, which must be an integral part of the implementation of the regulation. There has been a commitment by government to provide financial assistance to help farmers reach compliance.

KAP believes that there must be adequate funding for farmers -- in the form of direct incentives -- as part of a multi-year approach. In consultation with KAP, programs and incentives must be designed to ensure that the incentives are right at the start, so that the transition to the new rules will not have a negative impact on farm families.

The second issue that we expect to come to some kind of conclusion this budget year is the proposed tire recycling fee, which will now include all agricultural tires. This program is an important step towards a more environmentally sustainable future, but KAP does have concerns about the impact of the levies put in place by Tire Stewardship Manitoba.

In reaction to these concerns, KAP has recommended a tiered levy that includes \$4 for small industrial tires, \$9 for tires 24” and under, and \$15 for tires larger than 24”. This will be an important first step, since we need to have a better idea of how many agricultural tires will be coming into the recycling system, and at what cost. The original proposal by TSM was simply not appropriate for agriculture.

For both of these initiatives to be successful in the long-term, the government must be willing to put the dollars in place – and that’s something farmers need to watch for in the next budget. The ‘greening’ of Manitoba also comes with a price tag, and farmers cannot be expected to bear the costs.