



COMMENTARY

“The Voice of Manitoba Farmers”

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Farmers Need Input Into Rail Review

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After years of being held captive to poor rail services at exorbitant prices, farmers added their voice to the many industries across Canada that were calling for a Level of Service Review. This was finally put in motion by the federal government, and now producers, the grain industry, and other shippers are waiting for the release of the review's Terms of Reference. This document will tell us exactly what will be studied and what recommendations could be made to improve service in the future.

It's important to remember that all of the inefficiencies in the rail transportation system trickle back down to the farm gate, so farmers are left to bear much of the cost. KAP recently held a panel discussion on transportation issues during a meeting for our elected delegates, and it is clear that rail issues are top-of-mind for many farmers.

This is why KAP believes that farmers must have direct input into the Level of Service Review. KAP is concerned that farmers and farm organizations -- even though they pay the bill -- may miss the opportunity to voice their opinions since they are not directly considered “shippers.” Ultimately, While other players in the grain industry certainly have many service issues that must be addressed, there must also be a clear mechanism for farmers to forward their recommendations into this process.

In its initial recommendations for what should be included in the Review, KAP noted that farmers must have this avenue for comments. To date, we've not received a response from Transport Canada. Recently, we also sent a letter to Ministers Lawrence Cannon and Gerry Ritz and Manitoba MPs James Bezan and Merv Tweed, encouraging them to take a stand on behalf of farmers, and ensure our voice is heard.

The terms of reference are expected to be released soon. What is and isn't contained in this document will have a significant impact on what we as farmers can expect from rail companies in the future. KAP will continue to take every opportunity to speak up on behalf of Manitoba's farmers on important issues like rail transportation, and will be looking for the federal minister of transportation to ensure farmers and farm organizations have the ability to have their voices heard. It will certainly make things easier if the Review allows for direct producer input.