



MEDIA RELEASE

“THE VOICE OF MANITOBA FARMERS”

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Governments Need to Step Up on Rail Lines

Winnipeg – Rail lines help to link Manitoba’s rural communities and are the lifeline for future economic development. That’s why Keystone Agricultural Producers (KAP) is calling on the provincial and federal governments to do their part to protect the future of this essential infrastructure.

The situation is critical, as one rail line under provincial mandate is proposed to be abandoned and torn up for salvage on April 1, and will no longer serve the businesses and communities between Morris and Mariapolis. KAP believes that governments must not let this happen to this and other rail lines, and need to plan today for tomorrow’s infrastructure needs.

KAP has learned that the Government of Manitoba is planning to hold a stakeholder meeting to have meaningful discussion on the role of rail lines in rural development and expansion into new opportunities in alternate energy and value-added. KAP commends Manitoba Infrastructure & Transportation for taking this important step, and taking note of the recommendation that KAP put forward in August and October of last year.

“It may not be too late for us to save the Southern Manitoba Rail Line, and this should give all of us an important wake-up call,” says KAP President David Rolfe. “We need to plan for our future and figure out where rail lines fit in. All levels of government talk about protecting our resources, yet we seem prepared to let this resource slip away and sacrifice the future opportunities that it could bring. We can’t let that happen.”

A number of federally-managed rail lines may now also be at risk of abandonment. KAP believes that rail lines will be essential for communities and farmers to take advantage of new opportunities like biodiesel, ethanol, and value added processing. For these industries to be feasible, strategic transportation routes have to be in place to move raw products in and the finished product out. Both levels of government have clearly stated their support for ventures in alternate energy and value-added, and they must also do what they can in transportation to ensure these ventures become a reality. Once these infrastructure resources are lost, it’s unlikely that they will ever be replaced.

KAP has also called for a moratorium on rail line abandonment in Manitoba. Western Canada has already lost thousands of kilometers of rail lines, and this can’t continue.

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