



NEWS RELEASE

“The Voice of Manitoba Farmers”

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Budget '08: Where's the beef? *(Or agriculture, for that matter)*

Winnipeg – The provincial budget leaves many unanswered questions for farmers in Manitoba, according to Keystone Agricultural Producers. KAP had expected the province to take further steps to address the financial crisis facing cattle and hog farmers, and to better explain some of the ‘green economy’ incentives that have been promised to agriculture.

“Farm families that raise cattle and hogs are really hurting, and this budget isn’t going to provide any new support,” says KAP Vice President Robert McLean, who attended the budget yesterday. “KAP and other groups had given the province a range of recommendations on how they could increase their commitment to agriculture, but government hasn’t followed through.”

KAP had recommended in its pre-budget submission that the farmland school tax rebate should be expanded to include farm production buildings, so that more livestock producers could benefit. While the rebate did increase slightly, there is no expanded relief.

No new money, beyond what has been previously announced, was committed in the budget for cattle and hog farmers. To compound the problem, a raft of new provincial regulations have recently been announced or implemented for farmers, including the Employment Standards Code, the moratorium on hog development, and the new nutrient management regulation.

“Manitoba wants to build a green economy, and farmers can lead the way,” says McLean. “But so far, all we’ve seen are promises and regulation, with no tools or incentives put in place.”

Producers were promised that there would be a funding package announced related to the nutrient management regulation, but none was included in the budget. All political parties committed to a provincial Alternative Land Use Services (ALUS) program that would pay a fair value for the environmental benefits that farmers provide, but this has not been included in the budget. This budget promises to support greenhouse gas reductions in agriculture, but the details are very sparse.

Overall, there are a few small portions of the budget that will directly affect Manitoba's farm families. Because of the severe financial hardship facing many producers, the increasing expectations placed on producers by government, and the unique opportunity that farmers have to help meet the province's environmental goals, KAP was expecting a lot more out of this budget.

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Keystone Agricultural Producers is Manitoba's largest general farm policy organization, representing over 7,000 farm families and 20 commodity groups throughout the province. Our strength is our democratic structure, and our mission is to represent and promote the interests of the province's farm families.