



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

October 6, 2008

# **Parties Acknowledge Farmers' Transportation Challenges** Part three in a five part series

Winnipeg – Keystone Agricultural Producers (KAP), Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS), and Wild Rose Agricultural Producers (WRAP) sent a five-part election questionnaire to the Conservative, Green, Liberal, and NDP party leaders in September. The farm organizations, representing producers in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, were looking at priority areas for agriculture prior to the upcoming election. The four parties were asked to clearly outline their plans regarding five areas critical to rural voters: the environment, farm input prices, transportation, producer payment security, and working with farm organizations.

Continuing this week, APAS, KAP, and WRAP will be sharing the responses received from each party to five specific questions presented. This will provide Prairie voters the opportunity to examine the party platforms before casting their ballots in the election on October 14.

All three organizations were pleased to see the prompt and positive responses received from three leaders and their recognition of the importance of agriculture to our national economy and unique Canadian identity. Today the parties outline their positions regarding railway revenue caps and freight rate reviews. (Party responses are presented below in the order they were received.)

Canada needs a government that supports agriculture, and also implements the policies that reflect that support. KAP, APAS, and WRAP want to see a move towards a long term plan that ensures producers' sustainability—both financially and environmentally. In this election, agriculture must be a priority and all parties are encouraged to clearly communicate their goals to farmers and the rest of the industry.

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**Backgrounder:** 2008 Federal Election Questionnaire response to Q3



## **2008 Election Questionnaire Responses to Question Three**

The Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS), Keystone Agricultural Producers (KAP) of Manitoba and Alberta's Wild Rose Agricultural Producers (WRAP) sent an election questionnaire to the Conservative, Green, Liberal, and NDP party leaders in September. The four parties were asked to clearly outline their plans regarding five critical areas: the environment, farm input prices, transportation, grain payment security, and working with farm organizations. Today the parties outline their platforms in response to our question about railway transportation. (Party responses are presented in the order they were received.)

***“Revenue cap reductions in the rail sector have been delayed, and farmers have been given no relief from overpaying for rail service. Recently-announced service reviews may take years, further compounding producers’ frustration with the system while railways are receiving unprecedented returns on their investment.***

***Is your party satisfied that the revenue cap has successfully served both the railways and the farm community? If elected, would your government commit to a mandatory, periodic review of freight rates and subsequently adjust the cap?”***

### **Liberal Party of Canada**

“The Liberal Party recognizes the precarious situation farmers often find themselves in and understands the need for greater predictability of cost factors. If a review is expected to happen we would make sure it does happen without unreasonable delays and that the review is conducted in a fair and transparent manner. Farmers deserve a government that removes obstacles.

A liberal government would also consider serious review of the freight rates as way to help lighten the burden farmers carry.”

### **Green Party of Canada**

“The Green Party of Canada understands that transportation costs are a rising concern for both farmers and Canadian consumers. Moreover they unfairly punish small farmers, further rewarding large corporate farms. In order to combat the rising costs of food production, a Green government would support local food economies by enabling local areas, without industrial scale agriculture, to develop area-specific food safety regulations meeting national standards without placing undue financial burdens on local farmers and food processors.”



## **NDP**

“New Democrats have long been calling for major government investment in Canada’s crumbling rail infrastructure and infrequent service throughout our country. Although railroads built and connected Canada, it is truly regrettable that they have been allowed to go to ruin and, in many cases, have even been dismantled under Liberal and Conservative governments.

The current state of our rail system is unacceptable. Countless communities and businesses across Canada depend on our railways and yet they are being neglected. The NDP supports a new national vision for our railways. Better rail service is good for the economy and is one of the best things we can do for the environment. In addition to reducing congestion on our roads, rail is one of the cleanest and most energy-efficient systems of transport for both goods and people, and one which has already been proven by the test of time. The technology was developed long ago, is well-understood and is there waiting for us to implement it.

Recently, NDP MPs Tony Martin and Charlie Angus cited a current U.S. study reporting that an enhanced rail service in nine Midwest U.S. states could generate \$23.1 billion in the economy.

In the case of freight rates, New Democrats would be willing to develop a system of mandatory, periodic reviews of freight rates to determine if adjustments to the cap are warranted. However, New Democrats strongly support maintenance of the cap as many studies have shown its removal will most likely result in increased freight charges for farm families.”

## **Conservative Party**

*APAS, KAP, and WRAP sent identical questionnaires to all parties requesting a response by Friday, September 19, and that deadline was extended to Friday, September 26. To date we have not received a response from the party.*