



NEWS RELEASE

Economic Potential of Ag Sector Overlooked in Provincial Budget

March 24, 2010 (WINNIPEG, MB) –The Manitoba Cattle Producers Association reacts to this week’s provincial budget with measured disappointment. Having somewhat anticipated the provincial government to maintain the status quo in agriculture, the MCPA is concerned by further cuts to the program portfolio in the agriculture sector.

The 2010 budget was billed as a stabilizing budget, intended to get the province through difficult economic times until it rebounds from the economic downturn, but once again does not fully recognize the critical role that the agriculture sector plays in stabilizing the provincial economy.

“A stable agriculture sector is important to the entire province and that has been too-often overlooked” MCPA President, Jay Fox stated. “Beef cattle are Manitoba’s single largest agriculture commodity in terms of the number of individual farm operations in our province. Our industry plays a vital role in Manitoba’s overall economy and is an essential component in sustaining rural economic sustainability, so we’re disappointed that the cattle industry did not figure more prominently in this budget.” The cattle industry has struggled over the last number of years, according to Fox, and like other sectors, is also being further weakened by this economic recession. “Now, more than ever, the cattle producers of Manitoba are in need of support from the province in order to provide stability to our industry and avoid further decline. But given how important our industry is to the province, and based on the budget being billed as a stabilizing budget, we’re surprised that the cattle industry is not more strongly recognized and incorporated as a key component to Manitoba’s overall economic stabilizing and future viability/growth strategies.”

MCPA said that though they are pleased for the Northern Interlake region that the budget includes a commitment for coverage of EMI claims, as they have experienced real hardships due to flooding impacts, MCPA lobbies for programs that are tools for all producers, not only those limited to specific regions or segmented by political affiliations. Two examples of the types of programs that MCPA has been steadily working to have implemented are The Hay & Pasture Insurance program, and the Production Insurance program – these are valuable tools that would benefit all livestock producers moving forward. Fox stated they are therefore also pleased by the province’s commitment to work with the Cattle Producers of Manitoba with respect to the Pasture Insurance program, as this will be an economic stimulus to our industry.

Stepping up of infrastructure spending, specifically to provide improvements along PTH 75 South, TransCanada Highway East and PTH2, is also embraced by the MCPA as this will hopefully further expedite more international trade and improve transportation . Proper highway infrastructure is important to the cattle industry also because it aids in the healthy and safe movement of livestock.

Further outlined in the budget was the farmland school tax rebate, which was frozen and is not going to see an increase.

The budget also however stipulated a decrease for MASC programs – a negative development from the MCPA’s perspective. “With the government plans to ‘move more slowly than usual to implement new programs’, programs such as Problem Predator Removal (PPR) and Price Insurance, which are urgently needed by producers, are now going to be met with further stumbling blocks to their effective implementation”, Fox said.

The increase of lease rental fees on Crown Lands over the next three years also places an additional burden on cattle producers. Crown Lands are important to Manitoba cattle producers, as they are the largest users of crown lands for agricultural use and currently provide the much needed animal impact on this natural native landscape to encourage the growth of native species. That said, the MCPA expresses its expectation that the increase will allow for the much needed improved rights of ‘informed access’ for those leasing crown lands.

Fox also added that the grant assistance for Nutrient and Manure Management, which received a significant increase, was welcomed. “MCPA is hopeful that this increase will be forwarded more toward producers to assist in nutrient and waste management, and not have a large portion of the dollars be utilized for administration and enforcement.”

Overall, the 2010 budget has unfortunately not embraced or incorporated the number of visionary, viable programs the MCPA has proposed for joint implementation that would not only help producers make it through the dark economic times we’re all taking about, but that could also help to turn things around for the overall provincial economy. The MCPA remains committed to the cattle industry in Manitoba and will continue to work diligently, with boldness and vision, for every cause and every producer on the Manitoba landscape. We therefore now will look to working within the budget to find ways to encourage the long term economic growth of one of Manitoba’s most valued natural economies.

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