

MANITOBA BEEF PRODUCERS

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NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

August 23, 2012

Beef Producers Call for Premier to Address Ongoing Flood Impacts

WINNIPEG – Manitoba Beef Producers has released a letter urging Manitoba Premier Greg Selinger to immediately address ongoing impacts of the 2011 flood.

MBP is lobbying on behalf of beef producers who are still facing the damaging effects of flooding last year. MBP calls attention to the fact that this flooding was, at least in part, a result of government decisions.

MBP is calling for the Premier to announce immediate Forage Shortfall and Transportation Assistance programs. These two programs have been used in the past to ensure producers can feed their cattle over the fall and winter.

“Producers desperately need the Forage Shortfall and Transportation Assistance programs this year,” said Ray Armbruster, MBP president. “They have carried their operations through the effects of BSE, U.S. trade barriers and closed international markets, but without these programs they may be forced to shut down their family farm operations. We are concerned that the drought south of the border is pulling hay out of the province. Action is required before any surplus hay is gone.”

MBP also calls for the delivery of assistance that was promised to address the flood damage caused in the spring of 2011. Funds which are to be delivered by the Emergency Measures Organization (EMO) need to be sent to producers in order for their operations to remain viable.

“We have been fighting for this compensation to flow since last year,” said Armbruster. “Many producers in all parts of the province, including those around flood-affected lakes, regions in southwestern Manitoba and within the Assiniboine watershed, are waiting for these promised funds to arrive.”

MBP also asks Premier Selinger for immediate assistance for flooded producers downstream of the Shellmouth Dam in the Assiniboine Valley. Flooding caused by the release of water from the Shellmouth Dam is becoming a chronic issue with significant losses to producers and the Manitoba economy.

Without immediate action from the Government of Manitoba, MBP stresses it will be impossible for producers to plan their future operations.

The full text of the letter is attached and also available at www.mbbeef.ca.

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Manitoba Beef Producers is the exclusive voice of the beef industry in Manitoba. Our role and mission is to represent our beef producers through communication, research, advocacy and education. Manitoba Beef Producers represents 8,000 beef producers across the province.

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Honourable Gregory Selinger
Premier, Province of Manitoba
Room 204 Legislative Building
450 Broadway Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8



August 13, 2012

Dear Premier Selinger:

It has been over a year since the flood of 2011. At that time, Manitobans were bombarded by flood news every day. Many felt that they personally knew the people impacted around Lake Manitoba, down the Assiniboine River or near the Shoal Lakes. There was a sense of solidarity, with everyone in the province standing shoulder to shoulder to fight against the latest punch from Mother Nature. This is what Manitobans do after all.

Where are we a year later? Do we still have the sense of solidarity with the people whose land and houses were sacrificed for the greater good? Many ranchers around our great lakes and in the Assiniboine Valley would answer with a resounding “no”.

Many producers in Manitoba are still waiting for compensation that was promised to be delivered as a result of flooding experienced in the spring of 2011. This is especially true (but not limited to) compensation applied for under the Emergency Measures Organization (EMO).

A tour of the pastures and hayfields around Lake Manitoba is akin to a visit to alien landscape. Thousands of acres are still under water. Land recently uncovered is either bare or growing only bulrushes. Two years ago this land was productive and contributing to the growth and prosperity of the province, supporting families, local communities and jobs in our larger urban centres.

Many ranchers have, once again, moved their cattle away to summer pasture that is not covered by water or simply black mudflats.

Producers downstream from the Shellmouth Dam have **once again** faced excessive flooding due to the unplanned and unscheduled release of water. Crops, hay, pasture and infrastructure have been destroyed. The unpredictability of flooding in the Assiniboine Valley is not only significantly damaging their income this year, as has occurred in past years, but it is making it impossible for these producers to manage their businesses and plan their future operations.

Manitoba Beef Producers requests political leadership from you on all three of these issues.

Delivery of Promised Assistance from Damage in 2011 – Province Wide Issue

There are still many ongoing concerns with the delivery of assistance that has been promised as a result of the damage caused in the spring of 2011. This is especially true, but not limited to, funds that are to be delivered by EMO. This concern applies to all parts of the province that were hit by the 2011 flood, including land around our great lakes, regions of the southwestern part of Manitoba and all areas within the Assiniboine watershed.

my farm, your family, our future

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MANITOBA CATTLE PRODUCERS ASSOCIATION

While we acknowledge that significant portions of the promised assistance has flowed to impacted Manitobans, there are still far too many producers who have received little or no compensation. There are examples of producers who have had to submit applications at least three times and producers who have had multiple assessments but they are still waiting for compensation.

On behalf of all of the flood-affected producers, MBP is requesting your personal intervention to ensure that these funds flow immediately. We request an update from the Province of Manitoba on the measures that will be taken to expedite the flow of compensation that is mired in "the system." We also ask for assurances that staff adjustments and reassignments away from flood compensation programs will not occur until all outstanding claims have been addressed.

Ongoing Assistance for Areas Flooded in Spring of 2011

Producers need assurances that there will be forage available to replace the crop that would have been grown on inundated acres. These measures are needed to help ensure Manitoba keeps its cattle herd.

Without a plan, many of these ranches, which have survived BSE, US trade barriers and closed international markets, may be forced to cease operations. Every part of Manitoba will suffer if we lose these businesses.

Manitoba Beef Producers is requesting two specific measures:

a) Forage Shortfall

Manitoba Beef Producers requests the announcement of a program similar to the shortfall program instituted in 2011. The purpose of this program is to assist Manitoba livestock producers who are experiencing extraordinary costs due to forage shortage caused by flooding or excess moisture conditions that began in the spring of 2011 in maintaining the feed requirement for their livestock herds.

The program will provide assistance to producers with shortfalls in the forage production required to maintain their livestock over the 2012/13 pasture and winter periods.

b) Transportation Assistance

The purpose of this program is to assist Manitoba livestock producers who are experiencing extraordinary transportation costs due to forage shortages caused by extreme moisture conditions that began in the spring of 2011.

The program will provide assistance based on a calculated need to transport feed to livestock or livestock to feed for the distance greater than normally experienced due to forage shortages caused by excess moisture.

The program will take into account extraordinary transportation costs incurred from April 1, 2012 through March 31, 2013, with assistance flowing upon the submission and approval of an application from a producer.

Time is of the essence for the announcement of these programs for land surrounding our great lakes. Severe drought in the US is driving up demand for hay south of the border. High prices are encouraging the flow of excess forage (from regions of the province that may have excess) out of Manitoba. There will be limited forage left available for flood victims to purchase if the Province of Manitoba delays an announcement of assistance.

For this reason, Manitoba Beef Producers is requesting an announcement of forage and transportation assistance before the end of August 2012.

Assistance for Flooded Producers in the Assiniboine Valley

Producers in the Assiniboine Valley have no control over the increasingly frequent flooding caused by the release of water from the Shellmouth Dam. This issue is becoming chronic, with significant losses to producers and the Manitoba economy. Leadership is required from the Province of Manitoba on both short term and long term measures.

a) Short Term

In the short term, producers in the Assiniboine Valley require immediate processing of their applications for assistance from emergency measures. Significant infrastructure has been destroyed and compensation should be forthcoming—but it is not.

These producers deserve adequate compensation for their losses, even if they have production in areas not impacted by the flooding. Manitoba Beef Producers requests that the Province instruct Manitoba Agriculture Services Corporation to make assessments on the basis of spot losses in areas flooded by the Assiniboine River.

Manitoba Beef Producers requests that the “needs based” forage shortfall and transportation assistance developed for areas around Lake Manitoba be made available to producers in the Assiniboine Valley.

b) Long Term

Producers in the Assiniboine Valley deserve predictability on the operation of the Shellmouth Dam. This is required to plan operations and practical land use.

Manitoba Beef Producers requests that, beginning in 2013, the Province of Manitoba work with other jurisdictions to publish an operating plan for the Shellmouth Dam. This plan would include planned and published operating levels for the Shellmouth Reservoir and the Assiniboine River. This plan would also estimate when water might be released from the structure based on flood and water flow forecasts.

Producers operating within the Assiniboine Valley would have access to immediate compensation should they be impacted by flooding caused by the release of water from the Shellmouth Reservoir when that release is outside of the published plan.

Thank you for your time. Manitoba Beef Producers requests a meeting with you, Minister Kostyshyn and Minister Ashton to discuss these issues further. I would invite any of your officials to contact Cam Dahl, MBP General Manager, if there are any questions or comments. Cam is also our representative to be contacted to schedule the requested meeting. Cam can be reached at 204-772-4542 or cdahl@MBBEEF.ca.

Sincerely;

Ray Armbruster
President, Manitoba Beef Producers

cc: Honourable Ron Kostyshyn, MLA, Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives
Honourable Steve Ashton, MLA, Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation
Barry Todd, Deputy Minister, Manitoba Agriculture, Food and Rural Initiatives
Doug McNeil, Deputy Minister, Infrastructure and Transportation