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STATEMENT

April 28, 2020

Manitoba Beef Producers continues advocacy efforts related to COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on the beef industry

Manitoba Beef Producers (MBP) recognizes that the global COVID-19 pandemic has created very challenging circumstances for our producer members and the sector overall, particularly with respect to market volatility and disruptions in the processing sector. That is why MBP, along with its beef industry partners across Canada continues to advocate for effective programs and initiatives to help cattle producers and the industry deal with the serious impacts arising due to the pandemic.

In recent weeks MBP has been engaging with government officials about strategies needed to address the short and longer term implications of COVID-19. The Canadian Cattlemen's Association (of which MBP is a member) has put forward a series of recommendations to the federal government to provide immediate support for producers to keep their operations financially sustainable, some of which will require the involvement of provincial governments if programs are cost shared. This includes having the pandemic deemed a natural disaster under AgriRecovery to help flow immediate aid to producers. Meaningful enhancements to business risk management (BRM) programs used by cattle producers are being pursued, including to AgriStability and the Advance Payment Program. As well, swift modifications are needed to the Western Livestock Price Insurance Program in light of the steep spike in premium costs that has affected affordability.

Another key recommendation is to establish a set-aside program. A similar initiative was used during BSE. It would help address processing challenges by managing inventories throughout the beef production system and better match the number of cattle ready to market with the available processing capacity.

MBP has also shared these recommendations with Manitoba Agriculture and Resource Development Minister Blaine Pedersen and provincial government staff, seeking support for them. And MBP has raised other matters with the provincial government such as: the impact of successive droughts; interest rates charged on lending programs offered through MASC; labour challenges; ensuring producers who need it have timely access to driver testing and training; and, the importance of access to rural mental health services. MBP has restated its request for the agricultural Crown land lease rental rate increase to be phased in over a longer time period.

MBP is also encouraging producers to contact their elected officials to identify the impact COVID-19 is having on their operations. Letters have been developed for producers to send to their Member of Parliament (MP) and Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) outlining the urgent need for support for our cattle and beef sector. It is important that they have first-hand accounts of the serious challenges this pandemic is creating for Manitoba's farms and ranches, especially as they design COVID-related programs and look at changes to existing

programs. The letters to MPs and MLAs are available on the MBP website: <https://www.mbbeef.ca/news/email-your-mp-mla/>

MBP has a dedicated page on its website containing up-to-date information on COVID-19, including links to various programs announced, to news stories about the pandemic in which MBP has been interviewed, and to mental health resources, among other tools. See <https://www.mbbeef.ca/news/covid-19-updates/> Follow us as well on Facebook and Twitter for COVID-19 updates and other information important to the sector.

Looking ahead, MBP directors and staff will continue to provide input into the provincial and national discussions around COVID-19. We strongly value your input into these conversations and want to hear from you directly. Contact the MBP office 1-204-772-4542 or 1-800-772-0458, or go to <https://www.mbbeef.ca/contact/> for director and staff contact information.

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Manitoba Beef Producers is the exclusive voice of the beef industry in Manitoba, representing 6,500 producers across the province. The mission of MBP is to represent all beef producers through communication, advocacy, research, and education—within the industry and to governments, consumers and others, to improve prosperity and ensure a sustainable future.

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