

Bob Betcher, Groundwater Management Section  
Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship  
Via email only: groundwater@gov.mb.ca

Mr. Bob Betcher,

Keystone Agricultural Producers (KAP) is Manitoba's largest general farm policy organization and our role is to represent and promote the interests of our members. We are completely funded and directed by thousands of farmers from across the province. It is from this perspective that I write regarding proposed changes to the legislation that governs groundwater wells and resources.

Safe well water is critical to all farmers as well as other rural residents who do not have access to municipal water service. We would like to thank the province of Manitoba for working to ensure that the long term quality of well water is protected along with the health and wellbeing of our families.

KAP recently adopted policy calling on the province to move forward on developing a provincial water strategy that encompasses all of the issues related to water in Manitoba including flood protection and water resource management. We believe that managing and protecting groundwater resources is important and needs to be included in this process but suggest that any changes not be done independently of the other water issues we face as a province.

At this time we would like to make a few comments specific to the discussion paper you have circulated on this issue.

On licensing and certification, we recognize the need to ensure that firms and individuals that drill wells and geothermal loops are properly trained. We encourage the province to consult with stakeholders in these industries to ensure that certification and licensing is done effectively, reasonably and at a minimum cost to these rural companies.

Regarding the management and protection of groundwater resources, we would like to ensure that Manitoba Conservation and Water Stewardship considers the possible impact that proposed changes could have on a farmer's ability to utilize groundwater resources for irrigation purposes. In certain crop sectors like horticulture and potatoes, irrigation is a critical component to a farm operation's success. Consultation with the Manitoba Vegetable Growers Association and Keystone Potato Producers Association should occur prior to changes being made.

We would like to thank you again for consulting with us on this issue. We would like to ensure that after any legislative changes occur, we are contacted again to assist as regulations are developed to ensure that they are workable on the landscape and recognize some of the unique challenges that affect farmers and farmsteads. Please contact me through the KAP office if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Doug Chorney, President  
Keystone Agricultural Producers