

Agricultural Crown Lands Program Modernization

Public Consultation Paper

February 2018



A message from the Minister

Dear Manitobans,

Agricultural Crown lands are well-positioned to support the growth of the livestock industry in Manitoba. Farmers and ranchers are not only recognized as being adaptive and innovative, but also as strong stewards of the environmental landscape. In particular, using less productive agricultural lands for livestock production allows agriculture and the environment to thrive.

By modernizing the Agricultural Crown Lands (ACL) Program, we aim to recognize modern agricultural practices, as well as provide opportunities to showcase the innovative nature of farmers. Efficient, innovative use of agricultural Crown lands provides an opportunity to increase the forage productivity to generate more feed, which enables the growth of the livestock industry.

The first step towards modernization was the introduction of the new [Agricultural Crown Lands Leases and Permits Regulation](#) (January 1, 2018). In addition to addressing trade obligations, the new regulation provides consistency in the use of a tender process for forage lands (as per cropping lands). The tender process will increase transparency and accountability in the way that lands are allocated, and that rent is set. Policy development to support the regulations is now underway. The new regulation also enabled consideration of modern agricultural management practices and we still must determine the best path forward for the administration and management of agricultural Crown lands.

We want to make sure we are considering stakeholder perspectives, so that we can make informed decisions about policy direction for the management of provincial agricultural Crown land as a public asset. We encourage you to share your ideas as we work towards program modernization to support the growth of our livestock industry.

Sincerely,

[Original signed by]

Honourable Ralph Eichler
Minister
Manitoba Agriculture

Introduction

The Agricultural Crown Lands (ACL) Program facilitates use of provincial land holdings for agriculture, in the form of cropping leases, forage leases and hay and grazing permits. These leases and permits are available to farmers and ranchers to provide an additional land base on which to conduct agricultural activities.

Manitoba Agriculture is committed to the modernization of the Agricultural Crown Land Program, to achieve these goals:

- facilitating interprovincial trade, and complying with the principles of the New West Trade Partnership Agreement and the Canadian Free Trade Agreement
- increasing transparency and accountability of ACL Program administration for the management of agricultural Crown lands as a public asset
- contributing to Red Tape Reduction, by ensuring the ACL Program is administered in an efficient, effective manner
- contributing to provincial economic growth by helping to expand the livestock industry
- ensuring appropriate use of Crown lands to optimize agricultural potential, while maintaining landscape stewardship
- recognizing innovation in agriculture at all levels, including hay and rangeland management practices

DID YOU KNOW?

- Manitoba joined the New West Partnership Trade Agreement effective January 1, 2017.
- The Canadian Free Trade Agreement came into force July 1, 2017.

Mandate of the Agricultural Crown Lands Program

The Agricultural Crown Lands Program:

- supports the sustainable expansion of the livestock herd in Manitoba
- contributes to ecological goods and services
- provides mitigation and adaptation to climate change

The ACL Program recognizes the value of agricultural Crown land as a public asset – agriculturally, environmentally, economically and socially. It focusses on the appropriate use of agricultural Crown lands to achieve its goals.

Eligibility and the Application Process

What's new?

- expanding eligibility to obtain a lease or permit on agricultural Crown land, to include Canadian citizens and permanent residents, by removing the previous requirement that applicants had to be Manitoba residents
- clarifying that the applicant must have legal physical access to the Crown land, and maintain access, to hold a lease or permit
- adding authority to address fraud in the application process, rendering violators ineligible to obtain or hold a lease or permit
- clarifying that the fees listed in the [Land Administration Fees Regulation](#) apply to activities in the Agricultural Crown Lands Program (e.g.: applications, generation of lease or permit documents)

DID YOU KNOW?

Manitoba residents can apply for Crown land leases in our New West Partnership Trade Agreement partner provinces.

What else may need further clarification in policy?

- the role of the lease holder in the management and labour to be done on Crown land
- restrictions related to how much Crown land a person may have under lease or permit
- alternate management practices, such as subletting, custom feeding, custom grazing, livestock leasing or sale of hay

CONSIDERATIONS:

- How do we recognize modern and innovative farm management practices related to the use of agricultural Crown lands?
- What other eligibility requirements must be considered to hold a lease or permit on agricultural Crown lands?

Forage Leases and Renewable Permits

What's new?

- a new tender system to set the annual fee/rent for forage leases and renewable hay and grazing permits
- an average tendered value system to set an annual fee/rent for existing forage leases and renewable permits, as well as to set an annual fee/rent for all forage leases and renewable permits after the first five years

What needs further clarification in policy?

- term lengths for forage leases and renewable permits
- lease holder rights related to renewals and improvements
- development of a forage tender process, and considering minimum pricing

Proposed Principles of Forage Tender Process

- transparency to ensure a fair and open process
- accountability to ensure value to the public for the use of public assets
- predictability to allow for budget preparations
- trade resiliency to capture fair market values

DID YOU KNOW?

- Cropping leases are tendered for allocation, and to set rent. Minimum bids are based on a percentage of land assessment value.
- Improvements on forage dispositions include fencing and water supply.

CONSIDERATIONS:

- What factors need to be considered in determining an appropriate lease or permit term length?
- If there is a minimum tender value, what factors should be considered in setting a minimum price?

Expected Results

- efficient, effective management and administration of the ACL Program
- optimization of forage productivity through hay and rangeland management
- greater economic growth by expanding the livestock industry
- improved transparency and accountability by using a forage tender process
- trade resiliency from the use of a fair market-based rental rate

What do you think?

We want to hear from you. We invite you to provide your thoughts and suggestions on the Agricultural Crown Lands Program modernization initiative. All comments received will be considered as we move forward.

Send your written comments, on or before **Friday, April 6, 2018** to:

Email: agcrownlands@gov.mb.ca with the subject line "ACL Program Consultation"

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This paper is available in alternate formats, upon request.