

January 16, 2024

GOVERNMENTS OF CANADA AND MANITOBA INVEST \$450,000 IN MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS IN THE MANITOBA AGRICULTURE SECTOR

BRANDON—The governments of Canada and Manitoba through the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership (Sustainable-CAP) are investing \$450,000 over three years toward the Manitoba Farmer Wellness Program (MFWP) to provide access to professional counselling services to Manitoba’s agricultural community, federal Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Lawrence MacAulay, Manitoba Premier Wab Kinew and Manitoba Agriculture Minister Ron Kostyshyn announced here today.

“Farmers face unique stressors and challenges, but they don’t complain, and they always get the job done,” said MacAulay. “If they’re struggling with their mental health, we need to be there for them. Through this shared investment under Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership, farmers across Manitoba will have better access to the tools and supports they need to continue producing the high-quality products we depend on.”

The minister noted that this program is different from other mental health services available, as it is rooted in agriculture and the counsellors are familiar with the unique stressors of managing an agri-business such as seasonality of operations, impact of extreme climate events, global and market fluctuations and the dynamics of rural living.

“We support the hard work that farmers have committed their lives to and know that being a producer in the Ag industry can be difficult, said Kinew. “This is why it is important to have specialized mental health resources available specifically for producers and their families, and why we are proud to partner with the federal government on this key initiative.”

“The Manitoba Farmer Wellness Program is a pivotal resource for farmers, their families and their workers,” said Kostyshyn. “Extreme weather conditions, market fluctuations and disease outbreaks often isolate and challenge the mental health and wellbeing of farmers and their families. These funds will support the expansion of professional counselling services to increase access to mental health support.”

The Manitoba Farmer Wellness Program, a non-profit organization launched in 2022, addresses the mental health of farmers, farm families and farm workers through access beyond crisis intervention to longer-term counselling support that prevent mental health crisis.

“This new investment will allow the Manitoba Farmer Wellness Program to continue our important work of providing free counselling to Manitoba producers, their families and workers,” said Marcel Hacault, chairman of MFWP. “We understand the many challenges that come with farming and how difficult it can be to know where to turn for help when stress on the farm begins to feel overwhelming. This funding will allow us to continue our focus on getting the support producers need without the worry of incurring additional costs.”

The funding will support MFWP to ensure a consistent and professional service delivery and a standardized onboarding for new counsellors. MFWP works with over 32 industry partners to promote mental wellness and coping strategies and resilience.

The Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership is a five-year, \$3.5-billion investment by Canada’s federal, provincial and territorial governments that supports Canada's agri-food and agri-products sectors. This includes \$1 billion in federal programs and activities and a \$2.5 billion commitment that is cost-shared 60 per cent federally and 40 per cent provincially-territorially for programs that are designed and delivered by provinces and territories.

For more information about Manitoba Farmer Wellness, visit <https://manitobafarmerwellness.ca>.