



May 6, 2009

**An Urgent Letter to the Cattle Producers of Alberta
from Rick Burton, ABP Chair**

Dear Cattle Producers:

This is the third letter you have received from the Chair of Alberta Beef Producers (ABP) in the past twelve months. The first two letters were intended to provide cattle producers with information and questions about the Alberta Livestock and Meat Strategy (ALMS) and the Alberta Livestock and Meat Agency (ALMA). Now, I am writing to inform you about legislative action that is taking away your right to choose how your organization is funded.

On April 28, 2009, Agriculture and Rural Development Minister George Groeneveld announced the tabling of Bill 43, legislation making service charges (check-offs) refundable for ABP and three other commissions (Alberta Pork, Alberta Lamb Producers, Potato Growers of Alberta). This action was taken despite our strong and consistent message that cattle producers have the right to make a choice about the way that ABP is funded. In March, I asked the Minister to give cattle organizations time to settle this issue within the industry before the government intervened. Earlier in April, ABP sent a letter to the Minister making a formal request that the government conduct a plebiscite of producers to determine their opinion on this matter before taking any legislative action to make the check-off refundable.

We are extremely disappointed that the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development would choose to overrule the democratic process and the producers of Alberta by intervening in the operations of ABP and three other commissions through the imposition of a refundable check-off in place of the producer chosen non-refundable check-off. ABP believes in choice and cattle producers have a choice under the *Marketing of Agricultural Products Act* about whether check-off should be refundable or non-refundable. We think that refundable check-off does not give you more choice – it allows money to vote instead of people.

If you want a choice on this critical issue, contact your MLA and the Premier to urgently request a plebiscite. This is your industry and your organization. You have a right to make this choice.

Yours truly,

ALBERTA BEEF PRODUCERS

Rick Burton, Chair