

March 31, 2020

Dear Minister;

The Manitoba Nursery Landscape Association, MBNLA, is a provincial association dedicated to advancing the interests of horticulture and landscape professionals. MBNLA is a non-profit organization whose members are businesses and individuals committed to promoting awareness of environmental horticulture and upholding the highest standards of the nursery and landscape industry.

For the following reasons, the Board of Director's for the Manitoba Nursery Landscape Association has suggested why landscape plants and products should be deemed "essential.":

- With prolonged travel restrictions and more people isolating or at least staying close to home, concerns over mental health are on the rise - especially in our most vulnerable populations. Gardening provides not only a healthy, independent and physical activity that can be done at home, but one that is also highly therapeutic for many.
- With food security and local supply chain becoming an increased public concern, there is an increased desire from the public to grow their own food, for which many rely on independent greenhouse growers for seeds, pre-started transplants, soil, and most importantly - advice.
- Our products are living things, and their sale is tied to the cycles of nature and the local climate. We as growers across the province, jointly have millions of dollars of product already planted and being grown on for the 2020 season, and do not have the luxury of being able to stockpile inventory for sale at a later date. The majority of our sales are made within a roughly eight-week window in the spring/early summer - meaning a forced prolonged closure of our businesses could devastate our industry in the loss of our full annual revenues.

We are writing to you to seek clarity on the specifics of the Health order issued by Dr. Brent Roussin, Monday, March 30, 2020 that identifies essential businesses. Some sectors of our member businesses are clearly identified in this order such as; construction, lawn care and arboriculture. What is not entirely clear to our members is where the greenhouse, nursery and retail garden center sectors fall within this order. We are assuming they would be covered by the following items;

Supply chains

1. A business

(a) that provides another business listed in this Schedule with goods or services necessary for the business to operate, including transportation and logistics management relating to those goods or services; or

Retail and wholesale

2. A business that provides, either by wholesale or by retail sale, food or household consumer goods necessary for the safety, sanitation or operation of residences and businesses. Such a business includes a grocery store, supermarket, convenience store, butcher shop, bakery, market, hardware store and any other similar wholesale or retail business.

Agriculture and food production

20. A business that is engaged in farming, harvesting, processing, manufacturing, producing or distributing food or farm products such as crops, animal products and by-products or beverages.

Nonetheless, it is important to our members and the profession in which they are engaged that they are acting within the legal bounds of the order that has been issued.

We realize this is unprecedented and busy time for everyone. However, an expedited answer is vital as our members plants are a perishable product and need to be maintained. By the same logic it cannot make sense to say their product is essential and therefore they can produce it but the selling of the product is not as they are a critical part of the landscape maintenance and installation supply chain. Therefore, they must be able to remain open operating under appropriate regulations and restrictions.

There is no good time for a global health pandemic. Unfortunately for the association's growers, greenhouses, retail operators, and landscape service providers (unlike other agricultural sectors), the spring season is the most critical time of the entire year. For the vast majority of the Manitoba Nursery Landscape Association membership, sales for the year typically come from the eight-week time frame in mid-April to mid-June. Thousands of trucks ship the bulk of the year's orders to customers across the province during this brief make-or-break time. For most wholesale growers, the local Manitoba market is key, and with no destination for their perishable product, the business losses would be devastating. Simply put, this is a critical time for the economic well-being of the industry. Unless the value-chain is able to be linked there will be little to no need for the crops grown.

The retail component of the nursery industry is critical to the success of our sector as a whole, and for our retail community. Sales are at a peak as spring turns into summer. Therefore, the survival of retail nursery operations and the continuing employment of their workers depends on these businesses being allowed to continue operating during this crisis. We ask that home supply and hardware stores, including nursery garden centers and big-box stores, fall within the retail exemption for any future mandated closures.

Many of the products carried by garden retailers are agricultural, like seeds and edible bedding plants. They also provide the necessary tools and supplies for plants to grow. Together they are essential in contributing to maintaining a healthy living environment and a potentially an asset in

the food chain. In many communities, the garden retailer may be the only outlet where consumers have access to essential supplies for growing, gardening, maintaining or repairing their residences.

Furthermore, they are an important component of the Manitoba Economy.

The 2018 MANITOBA ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT HORTICULTURAL PRODUCTION conducted by the Manitoba Bureau of Statistics (MBS) provides the following information related to the Horticultural Sector in Manitoba.

From this source, MBS estimates current Manitoba horticultural production to include about 5,000 acres of fruit and vegetables, 2,900 acres of sod, 1,600 acres of other nursery products, (9,500 total acres of field horticulture) and 3.18 million square feet of greenhouses.

The total impact to Manitoba GDP at market prices is estimated at \$80 million per year. This is the net monetary impact to the provincial economy. For each \$1.00 in operating expenditures the GDP impact is estimated at \$1.00, while for each \$1.00 in output the GDP impact is \$0.80.

The total impact to Manitoba labour income (which is included in the above GDP figure) is estimated at \$50 million per year.

- This level of labour income is expected to support over 1,300 person-years of employment in Manitoba (synonymous with full-time equivalency - FTE). This total consists of over 900 direct person-years of on-farm employment, and over 400 person-years of spin-off employment in Manitoba.
- Total taxes collected in Manitoba by the three levels of government are estimated at \$25million, consisting of \$11 million in provincial tax, \$11 million in federal tax, and \$3 million in local taxes.

Our members product needs to be produced and the supply chain which began months ago cannot simply be stopped. If they can't sell their product they not only miss the revenue but will still incur all the costs of the goods.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Guy Dowhy, President

Manitoba Nursery Landscape Association