

MANIT^{BA}

NURSERY LANDSCAPE ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 1755 Stn. Main, Winnipeg, MB. R3C 2Z9 Phone: 204-661-6397 mbnla.com

April 11, 2020

Dear Garden Center and Greenhouse owner;

This past week a garden industry task force was set up by the provincial government. The province does not understand our industry very well. We have been asking to be classified as an essential service and the purpose of this initiative is to open a direct dialogue with the province explaining why we feel this is justified and the economic impact this virus is having on our businesses.

The first conference call was on the 8th of April this past Wednesday. A handful of representatives from the province were on the call including Minister Blaine Pederson and MLA Janice Morley-Lecomte. Garden Centre owners present were myself representing Lacoste and the MBNLA, Jerret from T&T Seeds, Shea Doherty from Our Farm, Lynn and Bill Coupland from Plants n Things, and Dorothy Dobbie from Pegasus publishing giving a well rounded representation across the province.

Our first meeting was mainly for the province to engage us in conversation to better understand who and what our industry represents and identify the critical issues we are facing with this shut down. We, the owners, made it quite clear and spoke bluntly about what the loss of business in spring means to us. The province was very receptive and understood how critical the revenue generated in May and June is. We talked about what opening would look like and what challenges our garden centres may have in meeting the requirements to remain open as a critical service such as enforcing a one-meter distance between customers and proper sterilization of the retail space. I mentioned the MBNLA is working on drafting a best practices guideline and the province is very interested in working with us on this.


The province has offered to possibly set up an online store that could be applied by garden centres to their own businesses. How this would work is still unclear but there appears to be someone exploring this in the government. I personally stressed the point that online sales weren't the saving grace they may expect it to be. As a business currently operating with an online store I can say it produces a small fraction of the sales that would normally occur if a customer would have access to our retail space.

We pressed the point that our garden centres are an essential part of the food chain that empowers people to take control of their food production and that ornamental gardening has a significant impact on our mental health. Surely if the hardware stores can remain open to sell caulking and lumber we should be allowed to remain open to sell vegetable plants, soils, and ornamental plants.

The committee met again on Thursday without the garden centre owners present but we have not yet received any notes from this meeting. I have personally been in contact with MLA Janice Morley-Lecomte, fielding questions as she works with the province. We expect an email from the province today but it was not specified what the subject matter will be.

I will report once again upon receiving the email.

Thank you,



Jordan Hiebert

Lacoste Garden Centre

MBNLA Garden Centers Canada Representative