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February 25, 2021

Dear MLA [Insert Name Here],

Lakeland Agricultural Research Association (LARA) has operated in the Lakeland region since 1991. It is a producer led association, which over the years, has grown to deliver applied agricultural research, demonstrations and extension to provide regional, unbiased information with respect to the three major program areas of: cropping, forage and livestock and the environment. LARA serves producers in the Municipal District of Bonnyville, County of St. Paul, Lac La Biche County and Smoky Lake County. Within these boundaries are over 2000 farms covering 1,900,000 acres.

The LARA Environmental Program is primarily funded through the Resource Management Stream Funding through the Agricultural Service Board Grant and is a longstanding partnership between the Municipal District of Bonnyville, County of St. Paul and Lac La Biche County. However, this program is at risk due to the uncertainty surrounding the ASB Resource Management Funding Stream.

The Environmental Program employs a full time staff position at LARA; which delivers the Environmental Farm Plan program to producers, and assistance to producers to apply for funding to implement best management practices on their operations. The agriculture industry specifically will need to continue to be proactive in environmental stewardship and education to alleviate and/or answer the concerns of the public, their customers and maintain social license. This program is centered on education; delivering over 20 workshops annually, one-on-one sessions, and a quarterly newsletter *The Verdant Element*. The program also conducts riparian health assessments, tree diagnosis for pests and disease, bio-control demonstrations, and supports watershed groups. The LARA Environmental Program also coordinates the Classroom Agriculture Program for zone 8, provides school presentations and other youth education program such as Walking with Moose and Mad about Science. Due to historically stable funding, this program has benefited from having a long-term staff member, who has developed producer trust, partnerships and networks to increase the breadth of the scope, quality and delivery of the program.

This funding is important, not only to our area producers, but to all residents within the municipalities that LARA serves. Support for this funding is necessary to keep Alberta agricultural producers competitive, relevant and resilient.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

Email:

Phone: