

Frequently asked questions: Alberta Beef Producers Plebiscite

What is the Alberta Beef Producers plebiscite?

The plebiscite will gauge the perspective of producers on whether the Alberta Beef Producers (ABP)'s service charge model should be:

- Refundable: a full or partial refund would be returned to producers at their request.
- Non-refundable: service charges would remain with the ABP without the ability for producers to request a refund.

What is a plebiscite?

A plebiscite is a vote of a population or member group used by decision-makers to gauge the opinion of the group on an issue or decision.

Who holds the plebiscite?

[The Alberta Agricultural Products Marketing Council](#) (Marketing Council) is conducting the plebiscite and is accountable for its implementation at the direction of the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry. A third-party Returning Officer has been retained to oversee the day-to-day operations of the plebiscite process and to make decisions related to the conduct of the plebiscite under the Plebiscite Regulation.

Is the ABP plebiscite binding?

The ABP plebiscite is not binding. Even if the majority of producers vote in favour of a non-refundable service charge model, ABP's regulations under the *Marketing of Agricultural Products Act* require amendment for ABP to move to a non-refundable model. This requires decisions by ABP's board, Marketing Council and government.

When is the plebiscite happening?

The plebiscite will take place between October 19, 2018 and November 27, 2018. Prior correspondence indicated that the plebiscite voting period ended on November 13, 2018. Marketing Council, with the approval of the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, extended the voting period by two weeks to ensure producers have an opportunity to vote in the plebiscite.

What is the ABP service charge?

As an agricultural commission under the *Marketing of Agricultural Products Act*, ABP collects a \$2 provincial service charge on every beef animal sold. The agricultural commission service charge's purpose is to invest in research, advocacy, market development, promotion and industry communication. The provincial service charge is refundable at a producer's request, following the process to request refunds outlined in ABP's regulations and bylaws.

In 2016-17 (year ending March 31, 2017), ABP collected \$10.4 million in provincial service charges and refunded \$2.5 million to producers who requested a refund.

Does the plebiscite affect the national check-off?

The ABP also collects a \$2.50 per-animal sale non-refundable national levy, often referred to as the national check-off. This check-off is not refundable and is not a part of the plebiscite.

What does it mean if ABP moves to a non-refundable service charge?

Currently, producers have the option to leave the service charges they pay on the sale of cattle with ABP or request a full or partial refund of the service charges. If a non-refundable model was put in place, producers would no longer have the option of requesting a full or partial service charge refund.

What does it mean if producers vote to keep a refundable service charge for ABP?

A refundable service charge model means that the ABP is required to refund service charges to producers upon request, provided that the request follows the process outlined by ABP in their regulations and bylaws. This is the current model.

How can I vote in the ABP Plebiscite?

There are three ways to vote in the Plebiscite:

1. Polling stations at Farmfair in Edmonton, AB, on November 9 and 10, 2018, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
2. Pickup and drop off voting packages at any Agriculture Financial Services Corporation Office.
3. Request a mail-in ballot.

Voters must meet eligibility criteria and bring proof of identification and residence.

Who can vote in the plebiscite?

Section 3(1) of the Alberta Beef Producers Plebiscite Regulation outlines the criteria for voter eligibility. In general terms, an individual or a representative of a partnership, corporation or joint venture may vote in the plebiscite if they are:

- 18 or older.

- Sold the regulated product between October 19, 2016 and October 19, 2018 and paid a service charge to the commission.

- Have not previously voted in the plebiscite.

The criteria is modelled after the requirements for producers to vote in an ABP election.

Who do I contact if I have questions?

For general inquiries about the plebiscite, contact Alberta Agriculture and Forestry's Ag-Info Centre at 310-FARM (3276), or the Alberta Agricultural Products Marketing Council at 780-427-2164.

Media inquiries: contact Alberta Agricultural Products Marketing Council, 780-427-2164.

To request a mail-in ballot, or for questions about the voting procedures, contact the Returning Officer: AlbertaPlebiscite2018@mnpc.ca, or call 1-855-667-3311.