

MEDIA RELEASE

Canadian Wheat Board Election Intervention Improper

October 30, 2002: “The Canadian Wheat Board’s continued intervention in the Director elections is totally inappropriate and must stop,” said Art Enns, President of the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association.

According to Enns, the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) has crossed the line twice in the last week by providing tacit and overt support for incumbent candidates. He referred firstly to the “open letter” from Board Chairman Ken Ritter, posted on the CWB’s website. The letter criticized those farmers who have elected to serve jail terms rather than pay the fines levied against them for their political protest against the CWB monopoly. Exporting wheat to the United States without a CWB export permit was part of that protest and it was this that took them to court.

Enns also cited the recent CWB news release on the North Dakota Wheat Commission’s trade challenge, naming sitting director Larry Hill as a CWB spokesperson. (Hill is seeking re-election as a director in District 3.) “This action raises Mr. Hill’s public profile, and gives him an advantage at the expense of his opponents in the election race,” Enns pointed out. “This is in direct contravention of the CWB’s own Election Period Code of Conduct.”

“The code specifies that directors cannot act in any way that compromises their impartiality, or serve as a spokesperson for the Board during the election period,” Enns said. “The code is very clear that acting as a CWB spokesperson not only provides the incumbent with free publicity, but potentially creates confusion between statements made on behalf of the Board itself and those made on behalf of the candidate.”

According to Enns, the CWB has violated these principles with both its recent public statements. “We will be writing to both the Election Coordinator and Wheat Board Minister Ralph Goodale,” he added, “and demanding that these violations be investigated and that these interventions cease.”

- 30 -

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