



For Immediate Release

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Hopper Car Transfer May Jeopardize Grain Export Sales

The Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association is concerned the federal government's announced intent to transfer over 12,000 hopper cars to the Farmer Rail Car Coalition (FRCC) will impede export sales capability by imposing an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy upon Canada's grain transportation system.

"Over the past three decades the federal government has been diligently removing itself from the (still) over-regulated grain transportation system," observed Doug Campbell, Alberta Vice President of the Wheat Growers. "Any move to transfer decision-making responsibilities for rail car management to a political and non-commercial entity increases shipping risks and investment uncertainty for farmers and grain merchants – this is simply not acceptable."

"Any measures the FRCC takes to exert influence over the apportionment of cars among railways and among grain shippers implies some farmers will be short-changed in terms of access to rail capacity," says Campbell. "We believe the marketplace, rather than a central administrative body, should determine the best use of those cars."

The Wheat Growers are part of the twenty-five member Farmer-Industry Partnership, a collection of farm and industry associations and grain handlers that is seeking to ensure the cars are allocated on the basis of commercial principles.

"We also note the federal government's announcement runs counter to the recommendations of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Transport", noted Campbell. "What happened to the Prime Minister's pledge to eliminate the 'Democratic Deficit'?" In the Committee's report released three weeks ago, the Liberal, Conservative and Bloc members recommended the government undertake further due diligence before making any decision, and that if the government did decide to dispose of the cars, the Committee recommended the government establish a formal Request for Proposal process "that is open and transparent and available to all interested parties."

"This hand-off by Cabinet of a public asset to a private party certainly ignores the Committee's recommendations and proper disposal principles," Campbell remarks.

"The Wheat Growers will seek to ensure the interests of all farmers are considered in any disposal option," concludes Campbell. "Our goal is to ensure market-driven principles govern how these cars are ultimately utilized."

The WCWGA, an independent producer organization, has spent 35 years bringing forth innovative farmer-driven solutions and will continue to lobby on behalf of forward thinking, progressive producers in an effort to make farming sustainable and profitable.

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Innovative, farmer-driven solutions.