



For Immediate Release

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CWB Needs to Focus on Marketing, not Politicking

The Western Canadian Wheat Growers is calling on the Canadian Wheat Board to focus its efforts on grain marketing, and to stop engaging in political activism.

In parts of western Canada, farmers have piles of wheat in fields that are suffering grade losses as a result of the slow movement of CWB grain. "Due to CWB marketing and delivery restrictions, these farmers have little choice but to see their grain drop in value," says Cherilyn Jolly-Nagel, President of the Wheat Growers.

"What the CWB system fails to recognize is that storage costs, quality risks and cashflow needs vary widely among farmers," notes Jolly-Nagel. "As a result, the ability to make key business decisions regarding our livelihoods is taken out of our hands, and is instead placed in the hands of those who seem more intent on political activism than on getting top dollar for our grain."

In recent months, the Canadian Wheat Board has ramped up its political activism. For example, the CWB recently engaged an Ottawa lobby firm to bolster its image among Members of Parliament. "How does this help sell a single bushel of wheat?" asks Jolly-Nagel. "Why is money that belongs to farmers being diverted to Ottawa lobbyists?"

The Wheat Growers note that earlier this year, the CWB also took money out of the pool accounts to join the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, which is well-known for failing to promote an aggressive reduction in tariffs in WTO trade negotiations. High tariffs in export markets currently limit market access and the price farmers receive from the sale of Canadian grain, oilseed and pulse crops.

"The CWB seems to have forgotten that over 90% of western Canadian farmers are dependent on exports, and that the Board's constituency – growers of wheat and barley – are suffering from the effects of high EU and US subsidies, as well as trade barriers," says Jolly-Nagel. "Western farmers urgently need a WTO deal, although you'd never know it, listening to the CWB."

As a state-sanctioned monopoly, the Wheat Growers believe the CWB should not be permitted to engage in political activities. "Individual Canadians, including western farmers, should not be forced to financially contribute to political causes they do not support," says Jolly-Nagel. "The federal government needs to hold the CWB directors accountable for this improper use of farmer's money."

The Wheat Growers note that in every one of its press releases, the CWB boasts that it "returns all sales revenue, less marketing costs, to Prairie farmers." Clearly, CWB actions do not conform to its rhetoric.

"The CWB seems to have lost its way," says Jolly-Nagel. "Instead of spending our money on lobbying firms, stuffed toys, birthday banners and glitzy ad campaigns, the Board should be concentrating on getting top dollar for our grain."

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.