



For Immediate Release

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Director Election Results Confirm CWB Monopoly is Not Sustainable

The results of the Canadian Wheat Board director elections suggest the controversy over grain marketing policy in western Canada will not be resolved until farmers obtain marketing freedom. While there was no increase or decrease in the number of pro-choice directors elected, over 37% of farmers who voted supported candidates who favoured a voluntary CWB.

“A compulsory CWB is not sustainable given this degree of support for candidates who stood for marketing freedom,” says Cherilyn Jolly-Nagel, President of the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association.

“All other trends in Canadian society point toward greater individual freedom and respect for diversity,” says Jolly-Nagel. “It’s only a matter of time before prairie farmers join other Canadians and gain the freedom to sell our private property to the buyer of our choice.”

The Wheat Growers are counting on the federal government to follow through on its campaign commitment to give western wheat and barley growers the same marketing freedoms as now enjoyed by farmers elsewhere in Canada.

“We know the rights of the individual will eventually triumph,” says Jolly-Nagel. “A compulsory CWB is not sustainable when it is opposed by such a large segment of the farm population.”

The Wheat Growers note that denying individual freedoms in other jurisdictions requires a higher threshold to be met. For example in Quebec, the support of two-thirds of farmers is required to impose a compulsory marketing board. If such a rule applied to wheat and barley in western Canada, farmers here would now enjoy marketing freedom.

In some respects, the Wheat Growers are surprised at the degree of support in favour of marketing choice candidates. Despite a government order, the CWB and its CEO campaigned heavily in support of the CWB monopoly throughout the election period.

“These results just go to show that the CWB is not reflecting the interests of all farmers,” says Jolly-Nagel. “The CWB falsely assumes the election of anti-choice directors gives it licence to ignore the wishes of freedom-seeking farmers. In a democracy, such an intolerant attitude is disrespectful of the aspirations of individuals and places the very future of the CWB at risk.”

The Wheat Growers note that anyone who self-declared as a farmer was entitled to vote in these elections. A CWB election review panel report released in 2005 recommended that a minimum threshold of grain deliveries be established.

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“Farming is a business, not a popularity contest,” says Jolly-Nagel. “If farmers were allowed to vote their production, we are convinced the votes would favour choice, although in principle we cannot accept that a fundamental freedom such as this should be decided on the basis of majority rule.”

The Wheat Growers urge the federal government to continue on its path toward a voluntary CWB, so that all farmers are free to market their grain either collectively or on their own, whichever is their individual preference.

“The Wheat Growers don’t think any farmer should have the right to tell his neighbour how to sell his crop,” says Jolly-Nagel. “We believe such decisions are best left in the hands of each individual farmer. That’s the only solution that respects the wishes of all farmers.”

- 30 -

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