



For Immediate Release

September 29, 2006

CWB Shirks Responsibility to Farmers

The Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association is disappointed by the Canadian Wheat Board's decision to shirk its responsibilities to prairie farmers by refusing to participate in the federal government's Task Force on Implementing Marketing Choice.

"The board of directors of the CWB is not acting in the best interests of farmers," says Cheryl Jolly-Nagel, President of the Wheat Growers, "What sort of business does not plan for its future?"

The Wheat Growers believe the decision by the CWB's board of directors to not name a representative to the Task Force creates a risk the CWB will not be well-positioned to be an effective market player once marketing choice is implemented. Not having the CWB's knowledge at the table also jeopardizes the smooth transition to the new operating environment for farmers, the CWB and other industry players.

"Our goal is to ensure the CWB becomes an effective marketing tool for those farmers who wish to use it," says Jolly-Nagel. "The irresponsible actions of the board are putting the CWB's future competitiveness at risk."

Jolly-Nagel notes the compulsory nature of the CWB imposes a duty on its directors to represent the interests of all farmers, not just those farmers who happen to support the monopoly. "The federal government needs to hold these directors accountable and instruct the CWB to prepare for a marketing choice environment."

The Wheat Growers point out that in a survey of CWB permit book holders released by the CWB earlier this year, when asked which "approaches to marketing wheat . . . would you prefer," 47% of respondents supported dual marketing (i.e. choice), 7% supported no CWB at all, and 45% supported the monopoly.

"Why is the board of directors only upholding the minority point of view? Since when was it part of the CWB's mandate for the directors to pick and choose which farmers' **political** views they wish to represent? Aren't they there to run a business?" asks Jolly-Nagel. She adds, "Just because directors were elected under rules slanted against marketing choice candidates doesn't give them the right to ignore our wishes."

"The irony here is that the Wheat Growers want the CWB to become completely independent of government," says Jolly-Nagel. "Yet in the CWB press release we see Ken Ritter, Chair of the CWB pleading with the federal government to maintain the monopoly, and thereby maintain the government's intense interference in the business affairs of farmers."

"The federal government needs to move forward and give farmers marketing freedom, so each of us can choose for ourselves the marketing vehicle that makes the most business sense for our farms," concludes Jolly-Nagel.

The WCWGA, an independent producer organization, has spent 36 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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