



For Immediate Release

August 14, 2007

Wheat Growers Welcome New Federal Agricultural Minister

The Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association welcomes the appointment of Gerry Ritz as the new federal Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food.

“With his farm background and roots in Saskatchewan, I’m sure he knows the issues that are important to Canadian agriculture,” says Cheryl Jolly-Nagel, President of the Wheat Growers. “His experience as Chair of the Standing Committee on Agriculture should also serve him well in his new role.”

While there are many issues facing agriculture, the key issue affecting farm incomes in western Canada is the stifling presence of the Canadian Wheat Board monopoly over western wheat and barley growers. The Wheat Growers will be calling on Mr. Ritz to take immediate and decisive steps to give prairie farmers the same marketing freedoms that other Canadian farmers now enjoy.

In this regard, the Wheat Growers are encouraged by the efforts of Mr. Ritz to reform the Canadian Wheat Board. In 2006, Mr. Ritz had introduced a Private Members’ Bill that would have allowed prairie farmers the ability to sell their grain direct to facilities owned by prairie farmers. While the Bill was defeated by Opposition Parties in October 2006, the CWB itself changed its policies in December to allow approved processors to purchase up to 500 tonnes of wheat and barley direct from prairie farmers.

“We are encouraged by the determination of Mr. Ritz to give prairie farmers more marketing freedom and will be urging him to tackle this issue immediately,” says Mike Bast, Chair of the Wheat Growers. “No other issue has such potential to quickly and substantially increase prairie farm income.”

The Wheat Growers will also be looking to Mr. Ritz to promote further processing on the prairies, Canadian Grain Commission reform, improvements in railway service and positive trade liberalization.

The Wheat Growers thank Mr. Strahl for his service to the industry, including changes to cash advances, improvements in farm income support, biofuel initiatives and grain transportation reform. We wish him well in his new posting.

For further comment, please contact:

Cheryl Jolly-Nagel
President
Farm: (306) 354-2517
Cell: (306) 354-7368

Mike Bast
Chair
Cell: (306) 537-8449

Innovative, farmer-driven solutions.