



For Immediate Release

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Wheat Growers Support Barley Plebiscite Question

The Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association is pleased to see the federal government is providing farmers with an opportunity to express their support for marketing freedom in the upcoming barley plebiscite.

“We are fully confident in the ability of individual farmers to decide whether a voluntary CWB is in their best interests,” says Cheryl Jolly-Nagel, President of the Wheat Growers. “By offering three options, the plebiscite gives every farmer an opportunity to state his preference.”

“While the Wheat Growers strongly support marketing freedom, we respect the views of all farmers, including those who would rather not see the CWB involved in barley marketing at all,” says Stephen Vandervalk, Alberta Vice-President. “In a free and democratic country, farmers should be entitled to express that or any other preference.”

Similarly, the Wheat Growers recognize that some farmers support a compulsory CWB. While we don’t agree with the idea that a farmer should be telling his neighbour how to sell his crop, we nevertheless respect the fact that some farmers hold that view and should be free to express that preference.

While some are suggesting the voluntary CWB option should not be on the ballot, the Wheat Growers maintain that it would be undemocratic to not offer a full spectrum of choices. “In Canada, we don’t exclude political parties from the ballot simply because some don’t support them or because others don’t think they stand a chance of winning. We respect diversity of opinion,” says Jolly-Nagel. “Let’s put all options on the table and let farmers make up their own minds.”

The Wheat Growers point out there are numerous examples around the world of co-operative and pooling marketing structures operating within an open market system. Within Canada, there are many marketing boards, credit unions, co-op stores and mutual funds that operate successfully without a monopoly. Even in the 1920’s the three prairie Pools operated a successful wheat and coarse grain marketing pool, with farmers voluntarily committing about half their grain to the Central Selling Agency.

The Wheat Growers will be seeking to ensure the plebiscite is structured so that each farmer’s economic stake is taken into account. “We don’t believe hobby farmers should have the same degree of say as those barley producers who depend on farming for their livelihood,” says Jolly-Nagel.

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