



For Immediate Release

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Support For Marketing Choice Grows

Results of the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) director elections, announced yesterday, confirm that support for marketing choice continues to grow among western Canadian farmers.

Marketing choice candidates garnered 43% of first-round votes, up from 37% in 2006 and 34% in 2004. However, the increase in support for marketing freedom did not translate into more seats at the directors' table, as only one pro-choice director, Jeff Nielsen of Olds, AB was elected.

The Wheat Growers maintain that CWB elections are not a reliable indicator of farmer opinion, as the initial voters list is prepared from CWB permit book records, instead of being a weighted vote among all producers of grain.

"The odds are stacked against us when CWB records are used as the basis for determining the initial voters list," says Cherilyn Jolly-Nagel, President of the Wheat Growers. "The election rules should be changed so that all bona fide grain farmers automatically receive a ballot, regardless of whether they deliver grain to the Board."

Surveys of prairie farmers consistently show that most favour a voluntary CWB, where individual farmers would be permitted to sell their grain to the CWB or to any other buyer. For example, the results of a plebiscite among prairie barley growers released in March 2007 found that 62% of farmers did not support the CWB monopoly over barley. The CWB's own surveys also confirm that most farmers support a voluntary CWB for both wheat and barley.

The Wheat Growers note too that imposition of a compulsory marketing board in Canada often requires at least two-thirds support among producers. Support for the CWB monopoly falls well short of this threshold.

"I should have the right to sell my grain to a buyer of my choice," says Mike Bast, Chair of the Wheat Growers. "There's a fundamental principle at stake here – other farmers should not be allowed to vote away my property rights."

The Wheat Growers remain determined to gain marketing freedom and give each and every farmer the right to decide what is best for their farm.

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