



For Immediate Release

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Wheat Growers Support Change in CWB Director Election Rules

The Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association supports proposed changes in Canadian Wheat Board election rules that will help ensure only bona fide farmers are eligible to vote in CWB director elections.

Amendments tabled in Bill C-57 in the House of Commons yesterday will change voter eligibility rules to ensure only “actual producers” are eligible to vote and that they have each produced at least 120 tonnes of grain in either of the two previous crop years. An “actual producer” is defined under the Act as a “producer actually engaged in the production of grain”. The existing legislation gives crop-share landlords and other interested parties an opportunity to vote in CWB elections.

“These changes help ensure only legitimate farmers are eligible to vote,” says Cherilyn Jolly-Nagel, President of the Wheat Growers. “It lessens the risk that election results will be skewed by the votes of hobby farmers and others who do not depend on farming as the main source of their income.”

The Wheat Growers would have preferred a weighted ballot. In its submission to the CWB election review panel in September 2005, the Wheat Growers had recommended that voter eligibility be based on the Australian Wheat Board model, in which farmers would receive one vote for every 500 tonnes of grain production or portion thereof, subject to a 100 tonne minimum threshold. Weighting a vote based on production would ensure all farmers receive a vote that reflects their economic interest.

“While a weighted ballot would have provided greater say to those who have a greater stake in this business, moving to a minimum threshold should at least reduce the abuses that can now occur,” says Jolly-Nagel.

In our 2005 submission, the Wheat Growers argued that *“the present system is already a weighted ballot with the “weight” depending on how many permit books a farm operation has applied for and received. In our view, this can lead to all sorts of abuse and skewed voting entitlements. We believe a weighting system based on economic interest would resolve these irregularities and provide a more just and defensible method of electing CWB directors.”*

The Wheat Growers note that 120 tonnes typically represents the grain production from less than a quarter section (160 acres).

“I don’t think anyone can legitimately argue that those who produce less than 120 tonnes should have the opportunity to cancel out the vote of those of us who depend on grain farming for our livelihood,” says Jolly-Nagel.

The Wheat Growers encourage all political parties to support this legislation so that the new rules can be in place for the CWB elections to be held this fall.

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