

The Prairie Voice

Fall 2004

From the President Cherilyn Jolly, President

With harvest officially over, we can reflect on the past year's challenges and triumphs. While it has been a difficult season for many farmers, we are a resilient group, often finding creative ways to overcome adversity.

During a recent trip to Ottawa, I met with the Federal Minister of Transport, along with stakeholders such as the Grain Growers of Canada, Saskatchewan Canola Growers, and the Western Grain Elevator Association, to discuss allocation of the federal hopper car fleet. I emphasized many farmers are opposed to the vague proposal put forth by the Farmer Rail Car Coalition (FRCC). In fact, the WCWGA has pulled its membership in FRCC. We asked the Minister for a more transparent process, a detailed business plan from FRCC and more time to fully understand the other proposals on the table. Since then, a meeting has taken place in Winnipeg where stakeholders had an opportunity to take part in the technical briefing. The allocation dilemma is far from solved but we'll keep you posted on the progress. I also had the opportunity to attend the first Canada/USA Grain Summit in Montreal this summer, the theme of which was building relationships and alliances. At each event we, as Directors, attend, we confirm the voice of the Western Canadian Wheat Growers is still powerful, and much needed in the agriculture industry. Our renewed energy has been very well received and I hope to maintain this momentum.

As chairman of the CWB Election committee, I would like to remind our members of a few important dates. On November 1, 2004 each eligible voter in Districts 2, 4, 6, 8 and 10 was mailed a ballot to elect a director to the CWB. Your vote matters, so please take the time to exercise your right. Get to know your candidates and most important, get out and VOTE. Our industry is rapidly evolving and it's up to each producer to choose a candidate with the knowledge, experience and good business sense to get the job done. December 3, 2004 is the deadline for completed ballots and the results will be announced December 12, 2004. If you have any questions about candidates, eligibility for statutory declarations, the preferential vot-

ing system or need clarification on the issues, call the WCWGA office at 306-586-5866 or go online to www.cwbelection.com.

The date for our annual general meeting and conference has been set for February 16-18, 2005 in Canmore, Alberta. We are pleased to partner with the Western Barley Growers Association to present a joint convention program. For the many farmers who are members of both organizations, attending one convention should not only be more cost effective for you, but will provide you with a broader program. I

hope to see many familiar faces at this convention and meet many of our new members.

If you haven't done so, please take a moment to review our newly revamped website at www.wheatgrowers.ca. You'll find information regarding policy, membership, agriculture news as well as an archive of media releases.

These are exciting times, and it is my continued honour to lead this group in farm policy development and initiatives. Thanks to everyone for their support and please know, I welcome feedback from any of our members.

A View from the Chair Randy Hoback, Chair

Your new Board of Directors has spent the past year re-establishing the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association (WCWGA). I'm pleased to work with this group of Directors. We have a good mixture of different strengths. With the help of our advisors, and a little time, the WCWGA will again be a huge force to be reckoned with.

The Board has addressed many housekeeping items. We hired AgriBiz Communications Corp. to run our office, now located in Saskatoon. We welcome Patty Martin as our Office Manager, Sheila Leys and Marilyn Canitz as our Administrative Assistants, and Joan Lasiuk as our Bookkeeper. Each brings a variety of strengths needed to handle our office. The 2004 year-end is complete, and we retained our not-for-profit status.

This newsletter is the beginning of a regular communication process with members. As a means of saying "thank you for your patience" during this time of reorganization, we'll be including several free months of membership with your 2005 membership invoice. When you receive your invoice, please take a few moments to update your contact information and provide us with your email address so we can keep you well-informed of our activities.

This past summer, we held a very successful dinner during the Farm Progress Show in Regina, Saskatchewan. The Board attended the Grain Growers of Canada meeting in Winnipeg and while there, met with representatives from the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB), and the Canadian Grain Commission, and hosted a reception for the industry. The WCWGA has managed to reestablish itself on many important committees.

Current issues include the transfer of the federal hopper car fleet. We need to ensure the transfer does not increase freight rates or decrease service. In a meeting with Ministers Alcock and Lapierre, we expressed our concerns and were successful in lobbying for a stakeholders meeting to get industry feedback. We've also had discussions with the CWB regarding changes to the voting structure and the CAIS Program. We'll be visiting with students in agriculture colleges across Western Canada to explain our policies to the next generation of farmers. We're also working with Minister Alcock on his mission to remove the "red tape" throughout government. The Board is looking at alternatives to relieve the cash flow problem created by BSE and the weather of 2004, including short-term relief to allow farmers to plant in 2005.

I encourage all members to be involved in this organization and I welcome any comments, feedback or advice you have. Don't hesitate to call me . . . I love talking grain and politics. I look forward to seeing many of you February 16-18, 2005 at our conference in Canmore.

On the Committee Forefront . . .

"Farm Income"

by Dean Klippenstine, VP, SK

In discussions with Ottawa, a key issue regarding farm income is the deposit requirement. A pricing survey has been initiated by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and conducted by IBM Consulting, and will address two key issues, the pricing of opening and ending commodities as well as the treatment of Canadian Wheat Board interim and final payments.

"Science & Technology" by by Bill Rusk, Director

You may have heard Monsanto has delayed its registration for Roundup Ready Wheat. The Board has had a fair bit of discussion on this issue. Some feel if Monsanto was denied the opportunity for registration, investment in agriculture research and development would cease or be dramatically reduced. Others feel if registration proceeds, some countries will refuse Canadian wheat, since our grain handling system is not prepared to segregate varieties. Quite the dilemma.

If issues like fusarium head blight, sawfly damage and the visual grading of wheat can be resolved in a timely manner, it would result in more money for producers.

Despite our knowledge as farmers, we still have much to learn about agriculture, the grain industry and transportation. Science and technology is such a vast field, and we need to seek scientists to advise us in an unbiased and accurate manner.

"Varietal Registration" by Curtis Hiebert, VP, MB

The Varietal Registration Committee encourages the development of a varietal registration system that focuses on food safety, is comprehensive, works closely with international regulatory bodies, and provides farmers the ability to choose from a large assortment.

Where should our grading system be in five to ten years? Which traits represent end user preferences? The millers are looking at falling number, kernel plumpness, gluten quality, Hard vitreous kernel (HVK) and flour quality. So, why shouldn't we get paid based on these traits? Cost effective driveway tests on these traits are not far away. We need to move toward a registration system that will allow farmers to choose from a large assortment of varieties based on

output traits, yield potential or disease tolerance. Currently, I am forced to choose between a few varieties of HRS wheat. With canola, which is sent through the same transportation and handling system as wheat, I can choose between hundreds of varieties, featuring an abundance of yields and IP varieties. And, when I market canola, I'm paid a premium based on specific oil content traits. Protectors of the current system have concerns about degradation of the quality of our wheat exports, namely falling number. We encourage a more comprehensive test for quality to give farmers the freedom to choose the variety that best suits their operation.

"Membership & Marketing" by Jeff Watson, Director

Now that our administration needs are being met through AgriBiz Communications Corp., we can focus on serving our current members better and increasing our membership base.

Our plan is to encourage membership in the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association when we meet with producers during the Canadian Wheat Board elections and when talking with students at agriculture colleges in Western Canada. We also want to ensure the Wheat Growers have a presence at the annual general meetings and other events of grain companies and agricultural organizations.

Our hope is to entice past members to return and to attract a large percentage of new business-minded producers.

"Convention 2005" by Jayme Day

We're excited about our joint conference with the Western Barley Growers Association, being held February 16, 17 and 18, 2005 at the Radisson Hotel in Canmore, Alberta. Dial 800.333.3333 to reserve your room and be sure to identify yourself as a delegate of the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association and Western Barley Growers Association joint conference, so you can obtain a special rate.

The upcoming convention will mark the 35th anniversary of the Western Canadian Wheat Growers as an association, and during the evening of the convention's first day, we are planning to honour our lifetime members.

We are in the process of confirming speakers and tweaking the agenda. So, watch for further information and conference details.

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**Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association &
Western Barley Growers Association
Joint Convention • February 16-18, 2005
Radisson Hotel • Canmore, Alberta
For reservations, call the Radisson Hotel at 1.800.333.3333.**

