

# The Prairie Voice

Summer 2005

## From the President Cherilyn Jolly-Nagel

As a farm organization, I think one of the ways you know you're being effective is when your critics step up to campaign against you. If recent editorials and articles are any indication, then the Wheat Growers are a roaring success.

Let me quickly add this criticism is not widespread. Usually, it's the same tired old bunch who lash out at the Wheat Growers whenever we put forward a good idea not in keeping with their structured view of the world.

But being a leading farm organization doesn't come without criticism. In fact, when the Wheat Growers are on our critics' radar, I know we're making progress.

It's unfortunate we have to spend time fending off these criticisms, as the Wheat Growers would much prefer to tell people what we stand FOR rather than having to convince people what we don't stand against.

Take for instance, those critics who suggest we are out to "destroy the CWB." Well, let's review the record – history shows the Wheat Growers were out in front pushing for cash and forward pricing, an elected Board of Directors, Pool Return Outlooks, protein grading, removal of quotas from non-Board grain, and the list goes on and on. If these changes hadn't been implemented, where would the CWB be today?

As Wheat Growers, our goal is to improve the CWB, so it can be an effective marketing choice for farmers. The latest example of this is our push to obtain a weighted ballot in the

CWB director elections. The Wheat Growers believe this would strengthen the CWB election process and lead to improved governance of the CWB. However, some critics have roundly criticized us for this 'undemocratic' notion. They seem to think those who have little or no economic interest in producing grains and oilseeds should trump those of us who depend on it for our livelihood.

The Wheat Growers have learned as many as one-third of permit book holders have not delivered ANY grain to the CWB in more than a year. I realize some of these folks may be bona fide farmers, however I'll bet many of them have very little, if any, direct stake in grain production. And yet, can you believe they're the ones who now get a very real say in our future as farmers?

One of the things I've learned from being an Economic Development Officer in my home town is you have to make your own good news. Tell your story the way you want it to be told. If you want everyone to believe your town is movin' and groovin' . . . tell them it is.

So it is with the Wheat Growers. We're movin' and groovin', putting forward our own positive solutions. We'll keep on telling those good news stories and try to shrug off those who seem to find their greatest joy in attacking the solutions of others, rather than advancing their own.

I am convinced agriculture can be a good news story. The Wheat Growers are striving to make that happen.

## CWB Election Review Panel

On August 17 in Saskatoon, the Wheat Growers presented its recommendations to the CWB Election Review Panel. Highlights include:

- All producers (including crop-share landlords) should be eligible to vote.
- Introduce a weighted ballot, such that all producers get one vote for every 500 tonnes (or portion thereof) of their average production, subject to a minimum threshold of 100 tonnes.
- Base initial voting entitlement on average CWB deliveries over the past 3 years. However, give farmers an opportunity to increase their voting entitlement by providing the election co-ordinator with evidence of their actual level of production.
- Re-balance the configuration of districts, so that grain production in each district is roughly the same. As much as possible, base district along provincial boundaries.
- Eliminate the preferential ballot system, in favour of the more familiar first-past-the-post method.
- Strengthen the CWB Election Period Code of Conduct to ensure the CWB does not engage in activities that may be perceived as supporting any particular candidate.
- Establish an independent Election Commission, responsible for hiring and oversight of the election co-ordinator, auditing the integrity of the voters' list, monitoring the conduct of all parties during the election, and arbitrating any disputes or complaints.

For a copy of our formal submission to the review panel, contact our office or go to our website at [www.wheatgrowers.ca](http://www.wheatgrowers.ca) and click on "Policies."

## Upcoming Events . . .

- The Wheat Growers will be at the following tradeshow, so please stop by our booth:
  - Agri-Trade: November 9 to 12, 2005, Westerner Park, Red Deer, Alberta.
  - Western Canadian Crop Production Show: January 9 to 12, 2006, Prairieland Park, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan.
  - Manitoba AgDays: January 17 to 19, 2006, Brandon Keystone Centre, Brandon, Manitoba.
- Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association Convention 2006: March 15 to 17, 2006, Delta Bessborough, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Keep posted for details.

## Wheat Growers in Action

- On May 9, the Wheat Growers issued a media release supporting the federal government's announcement of \$17 million in funding towards food and nutraceutical research at the Winnipeg-based National Centre for Agri-Food Research in Medicine.
- On May 17, the Wheat Growers issued a media release opposing the Canadian Grain Commission's (CGC) proposal to require mandatory licensing and bonding of all grain companies. The Wheat Growers believe mandatory bonding could force a number of small, vital competitors out of the marketplace. Our position is all companies (large or small) should have the option of being bonded or not, however if bonded, farmers should be fully protected.
- On June 17, President Cherilyn Jolly-Nagel, Chair Randy Hoback and Saskatchewan Vice President Dean Klippenstine met with Hon. Mark Wartman, Saskatchewan Minister of Agriculture and Food. Several issues were discussed including crop insurance and provincial funding for CAIS. We were pleased Min. Wartman announced in July the Province of Saskatchewan would fully fund its share of the CAIS program.
- On June 13, the Wheat Growers issued a media release supporting the CGC's proposal to eliminate the KVD requirement on the six minor wheat classes. While we would have preferred KVD be eliminated on all wheat classes (and replaced where necessary by a variety declaration system), we see this proposal as a positive first step toward that goal.
- Thanks to those members and farmers who stopped by our booth at the Farm Progress Show in Regina, June 15-17. Congratulations to Wheat Grower member Sarah Leguee of Weyburn, SK, the winner of our Trip for Two to the 2005 Grey Cup in Vancouver. Thanks to DuPont for generously sponsoring this draw. We were delighted over 90 members and guests attended our summer BBQ held during the Show. Special thanks to Monsanto, Cargill, Green-Trac SprayMasters and Agri-Tel Grain for sponsoring the BBQ. We look forward to seeing many members at the trade show and member dinner taking place at Agri-Trade, in Red Deer, November 9-12.
- Congratulations to WCWGA member Darren Watson of Avonlea, SK for being named the Saskatchewan Outstanding Young Farmer for 2005. Congratulations as well to President Cherilyn Jolly-Nagel and her husband David, as well as Chair Randy Hoback and his wife Jerri on being two of the four nominees for the award.
- On June 20, Con Johnson, Director, attended the Challenge for Grain conference held at the Port of Vancouver. Various participants talked about the increasing difficulties of shipping grain through the Port. Less than a week later, container shipments through the Port were crippled by a dispute between truckers and the companies that employ them. On June 29, the Wheat Growers issued a release calling on the federal and provincial governments to mediate a solu-

tion, however it would be more than a month before container movement was fully restored.

- On June 20, the Wheat Growers issued a media release supporting the federal government's announcement of a CWB election review panel. Named to the panel were Greg Porozni of Vegreville, AB, Cecilia Olver of Corning, SK and David Rolfe of Elgin, MB. The Wheat Growers made a presentation to the panel in August calling for a weighted ballot and revisions to the voter eligibility rules.
- On June 28 and 29, Mike Bast, Director, and Blair Rutter, Executive Director, attended the Grain Quality Assurance conference hosted by the CGC in Winnipeg. While new grading and variety identification techniques are becoming available, it is apparent the "black box" technology that would provide a fast and low-cost way of identifying specific wheat varieties within a sample is still several years away.
- On July 6 and 7, Cherilyn Jolly-Nagel and Blair Rutter attended the Grain Growers of Canada semi-annual meeting in Chatham, ON. National safety nets, trade liberalization, pesticide harmonization, CWB review, food safety, environmental policy and seed regulations were among the issues where the Grain Growers worked to develop common positions. While in Ontario, the Wheat Growers also met with representatives of Dover Mills, BASF and DuPont to exchange views on various industry issues.
- The Wheat Growers held a Board meeting in Saskatoon on July 15 and 16. During the meeting, Directors received a presentation from Doug McBain, President of the Western Barley Growers Association, on the clearinghouse project. This project is designed to provide farmers and industry with a tool to protect transaction risk, and could eventually provide a lower-cost alternative to the bonding of companies now required by the CGC. Presentations were also received from Dr. Brian Fowler of the University of Saskatchewan on wheat variety development, from Gord Kurbis of the CWB regarding its falling number grading proposal and from Mark Hemmes of Quorum Corporation. Quorum is the federally-appointed "grain monitor" that tracks and reports on the performance of the grain handling and transportation system.
- On July 19, Geoff Hewson, Director and Blair Rutter attended a crop tour and seminar hosted by Vandaele Seeds Ltd and Opti-Crop at Medora, MB. At the meeting, Blair gave a presentation on some of the trends he sees in the Canadian grain industry.
- On July 25, Joe Janzen, Director, and Blair Rutter participated in a research meeting in Morden, MB in which several farm organizations raised concerns about the level and direction of public funding into crop research. The groups in attendance considered whether to form a coalition to address these concerns. While no formal coalition has been formed as yet, the group agreed on the need for greater farmer input into federal and provincial research funding and policy decisions. □

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