

Support Canadian Food, Canadian Farmers and the Canadian Wheat Board

The Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) is under attack by the federal government. Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz has stated repeatedly that he will not recognize the results of the voluntary plebiscite recently conducted by the CWB in which results were clearly in favour of keeping the CWB as the sole selling agent for prairie wheat and barley intended for human consumption. Instead he plans to introduce legislation to end the CWB's single desk authority in the fall session of Parliament.

The CWB was created by an Act of Parliament, and is run by a 15-member Board of Directors, ten of whom are elected by farmers. The CWB provides fair, equitable, reliable and cost-effective service to farmers. The existence of the CWB provides stability in uncertain times, and is a foundation of Canada's grain sector.

Ending the single desk authority of the CWB would throw western agriculture into turmoil and would transfer wealth created by Canadian farmers to big private, often foreign-owned grain companies instead of being returned to farmers and spent in their communities. The Minneapolis Grain Exchange has already changed its rules to allow for speculation in futures contracts for Canadian wheat and barley, which will result in increasing price volatility for purchasers without providing any benefit to farmers.

Canada's political system is built on representative democracy. This means that the law, not merely the person in power, is to be respected and followed. The CWB Act is a law made by Parliament, and it contains a clause that requires a farmer vote before any substantive changes are made to the single desk authority. Our current government has stated it is ready to eliminate this requirement, or perhaps repeal the whole Act, in order to avoid such a vote. This is deeply concerning, as it strikes at the heart of our Canadian democracy.

We the undersigned:

- *Recognize the billions of dollars of economic value that the CWB annually creates for farmers, rural communities, short line railroads and the whole of Canada through its superior marketing ability, capacity to defend Canadian interests in trade disputes, and the fact that it returns all net proceeds from sales to farmers.*
- *Are proud of the strong international reputation for quality and reliability that Canadian wheat and barley have, which is a direct result of the CWB and its companion institutions, Canadian International Grains Institute and the Canadian Grain Commission.*
- *Deplore the federal government's stated intention to deny the outcome of the recent voluntary plebiscite where 62% of farmers voted in favour of keeping the single desk for wheat and 51% supported keeping it for barley.*

We therefore call upon the federal government to immediately stop undermining the single desk authority of the CWB. If any changes to the Board are contemplated, we insist that the federal government comply with the Canadian Wheat Board Act Section 47.1 which requires a binding plebiscite (vote) of farmers before any substantive change to its single desk authority is implemented.

Signed: