

## **Strengthening the Canadian Wheat Board**

It is human nature to want to make things stronger, better. So it's only natural for farmers to want to make the Canadian Wheat Board stronger and better.

As current directors of the Wheat Board, we have both a personal and professional stake in improving the organization. We both chose to get involved and work from within the organization, rather than complain about it from the sidelines.

We also have a vision of how to make this happen. It all begins with an attitude of openness. Open to new ideas, open to sharing new ideas and open to trying new ideas.

We particularly believe the Wheat Board could be a more effective organization if it were to give farmers more information about its decisions and activities. We realize a degree of commercial sensitivity surrounds individual sales and some marketing activities, but surely after some transactions are completed, the Wheat Board could explain the circumstances of those trades. In fairness, this does sometimes occur, but it could happen much more often.

Farmers shouldn't have to rely on commodity analysts to learn this information.

The CWB could also share more details with farmers about its business decisions. The Wheat Board is a huge, complex organization that often makes huge, complex decisions. Farmers are not always given the information they need to understand the Wheat Board's decision-making process. In the absence of such information, speculation and distrust can grow. This has, at times, disconnected the Wheat Board and the farmers it serves.

Openness also is not just about giving information, but also gathering and reacting to it. In our vision for the Wheat Board, the organization would become much better at listening and responding to the needs of farmers.

The CWB's own producer surveys are clear indicators that farmers expect more. The 2010 CWB Producer Survey shows that only 48% of farmers want only the CWB doing their wheat marketing and only 34% of farmers want only the CWB doing their barley marketing. Numerous surveys have shown producers want greater choice in delivery timing.

What farmers say again and again to us is they want the Wheat Board to focus on its core activities: market development and marketing of Canadian wheat and barley. They also want to see the Wheat Board understand the diversity of their individual businesses and what is needed for them to be successful, today and in the future.

A stronger, better Canadian Wheat Board would also focus on giving farmers the best possible returns on their products. It would not only seek the best prices, but the best long-term value. Farmers' best value comes from the yields they achieve as well as the prices they receive. Not all the markets in the world want #1 high-protein wheat, so let's market all the different qualities of wheat we produce in Canada with the same intensity as the top class. The CWB must also explore the many opportunities and innovations in today's milling and baking markets and help farmers take full advantage of them.

To achieve all of this requires some dramatic, but not radical or even legislative changes to the Wheat Board. But all that's really needed to start this are directors who share a single attitude: openness and a willingness to change.

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