

Frequently asked questions: Potato Growers of Alberta Plebiscite

What is the Potato Growers of Alberta plebiscite?

The plebiscite is a vote of producers on the question of the Potato Growers of Alberta (PGA)'s service charge model.

The plebiscite will gauge the perspective of producers on whether the PGA's service charge model should be:

- Refundable: a full or partial refund would be returned to producers at their request.
- Non-refundable: service charges would remain with the PGA without the ability for producers to request a refund.

What is a plebiscite?

A plebiscite is a vote of a population or member group used by decision-makers to gauge the opinion of the group on an issue or decision.

Who holds the plebiscite?

[The Alberta Agricultural Products Marketing Council](#) (Marketing Council) is conducting the plebiscite and is accountable for its implementation at the direction of the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry. A third-party Returning Officer has been retained to oversee the day-to-day operations of the plebiscite process and to make decisions related to the conduct of the plebiscite under the *Potato Growers of Alberta Plebiscite Regulation*.

Is the plebiscite binding?

The plebiscite is not binding. Even if the majority of producers vote in favour of a non-refundable service charge model, ABP's regulations under the *Marketing of Agricultural Products Act* require amendment for ABP to move to a non-refundable model. This requires decisions by ABP's board, Marketing Council and government.

When is the plebiscite happening?

Voting will take place at the Potato Growers of Alberta Annual General Meeting November 15, 2018 in Enoch. Polls will be open from 7:30 to 3:00 p.m.

What is the PGA service charge?

As an agricultural commission under the *Marketing of Agricultural Products Act*, the PGA collects a service charge on every 100 pounds of potatoes sold. The service charge is seven cents for potatoes sold for processing and two cents for culled potatoes sold for processing.

An agricultural commission's service charge's purpose is to invest in research, advocacy, market development, promotion, and industry communication. PGA's service charge is currently refundable at a producer's request, following the process outlined in the PGA's regulations and policies.

In 2016-17, the PGA's revenue was approximately \$1.7 million, of which service charges were approximately \$1.4 million. Refunds were approximately \$42,000, or three per cent of total service charge revenue.

What does it mean if the PGA moves to a non-refundable service charge?

Currently, producers have the option to leave the service charges they pay on the sale of potatoes with the commission or producers may request a full or partial refund. If a non-refundable model was put in place, producers would no longer have the option of requesting a full or partial service charge refund.

What does it mean if producers vote to keep a refundable service charge?

A refundable service charge model means the PGA would be required to refund service charges upon a producer's request, provided the request follows the process outlined in the PGA's regulations and policies. This is the current model.

How can I vote in the plebiscite?

Voters may vote in two ways:

- In person at the polling station at the PGA AGM.
- Through proxy appointment at the PGA AGM.

Voters who are unable to attend the PGA AGM in person may appoint a proxy to vote in their place. To request a proxy form, contact the Returning Officer at AlbertaPlebiscite2018@mnp.ca or by phone 1-855-667-3311. You may also download a copy of the form from agriculture.alberta.ca/potatoplebiscite.

Voters must meet eligibility criteria and bring proof of identification and residence.

Who can vote in the plebiscite?

Section 3(1)(a) of the *Potato Growers of Alberta Plebiscite Regulation* outlines the official criteria for voter eligibility. In general terms, an individual or a representative of a partnership or other corporate entity may vote in the plebiscite if they were a licensed producer in the 2018 crop year. The criteria is modelled after the PGA election process.

A proxy who has been appointed by a producer may also vote on behalf of a producer.

Who do I contact if I
have questions?

For General Inquiries about the plebiscite, contact Alberta Agriculture and Forestry's Ag-Info Centre at 310-FARM (3276), or the Alberta Agricultural Products Marketing Council at 780-427-2164.

Media Inquiries: contact the Alberta Agricultural Products Marketing Council, 780-427-2164.

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