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Grain Growers call for more constructive debate at Ag Committee

The Grain Growers of Canada are calling on all political parties to set aside their differences and engage in a more constructive debate at the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food.

In a letter to the members of the committee, the Grain Growers of Canada said they are all are guilty of behaviour that disrupts the legislative process.

“Blackberry use, partisan attacks and a general lack of professionalism have become the norm at Committee,” said Doug Robertson, President of the Grain Growers of Canada. “We expect our parliamentarians to engage in an intelligent, respectful debate that leads to better policy for farmers.”

The Grain Growers of Canada are concerned as a group that has been called as a witness several times to testify. In one instance, the Committee was adjourned because of a partisan dispute while witnesses were still at the table.

Witnesses often put a great deal of time and effort into presentations hoping to influence policy decisions. The Grain Growers of Canada are also concerned that some members are too distracted by their electronic devices to engage with the witnesses in a constructive manner.

“If someone is frequently busy checking their Blackberry, they are not following the discussion as closely as they should be,” said Robertson. “We understand that our Members of Parliament are busy people, but Committee time should be for Committee business.”

These problems are not specific to any one member or one party. The Grain Growers of Canada are encouraging all members of the Committee to put away their Blackberries and refrain from unnecessarily partisan attacks while witnesses are present.

The Grain Growers of Canada represent over 80,000 farmers across Canada through its member associations.

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For more information:

Doug Robertson, President of the Grain Growers of Canada, 403-819-8372

Richard Phillips, Executive Director of the Grain Growers of Canada, 613-875-1795

www.ggc-pgc.ca