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Concerns over CWB election reforms unwarranted say Grain Growers

Proposed changes to the Canadian Wheat Board Act to create a reasonable threshold of 40 tonnes of one of the seven major grains for producers to vote in CWB director elections has been met with some protest. The Grain Growers of Canada believe these concerns are unwarranted.

The National Farmers Union (NFU), for example, released a statement faulting the bill as being “anti-democratic” for both limiting the number of non-farmers and allowing producers of non-CWB crops to vote.

“The fact is that this legislation will make elections fairer for farmers who make their living producing grain. We respect the choices made by hobby farmers, but they should not have an equivalent voice to those whose livelihoods are affected by the Canadian Wheat Board,” explained Doug Robertson, President of the Grain Growers of Canada.

Legislation proposed by the federal government is in line with a 2005 CWB Election Review Panel, which recommended a modest 40 tonne minimum in order to make the voters list more representative of actual farmers.

Also, according to the NFU, farmers who grow canola, pulse and flax should not have a say in CWB director elections.

“The vast majority of canola, pulse and flax farmers have a CWB crop in their rotation, and even if they don’t, the price outlook for CWB grains likely had a bearing on their cropping decisions. It is nonsensical to oppose allowing these farmers to have a voice,” said Robertson. “If the NFU is so opposed to allowing these farmers to vote, then they should recommend legislation to remove reference to these grains in the Canadian Wheat Board Act.”

The Grain Growers of Canada have called on all parties to expedite Bill C-27 in order for these positive changes to be in effect for the next round of director elections this fall. This can only happen if it is moved through Parliament before the summer break in June.

The Grain Growers of Canada represent over 80,000 successful farmers through its membership organizations who grow wheat, oats, barley, canola, corn, peas, lentils and triticale.

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