



NEWS RELEASE

Sask Wheat advocates for Saskatchewan producers on Ottawa trip

Saskatoon (February 9, 2017) - Following January's Annual General Meeting (AGM), Saskatchewan Wheat Development Commission (Sask Wheat) Chair Bill Gehl and General Manager Harvey Brooks made a trip to Ottawa on February 1 and 2 to advocate for a farmer-focussed transportation policy and market transparency changes on behalf of Saskatchewan wheat producers. The trip was also an opportunity to update federal officials on important business arising from the AGM, including the approval of a resolution for Sask Wheat to assume the collection and financial responsibilities of the transitional Western Canadian Deduction (WCD) under the Sask Wheat check-off.

Gehl and Brooks met with several elected and government officials, including important meetings with officials from Transport Canada and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. Among the issues discussed were the anticipated changes to the Canadian Transportation Act (CTA) regarding grain transportation that were announced by Transport Minister Marc Garneau in December 2016.

"Sask Wheat felt it was important to engage with both Transport Canada and Agriculture Canada officials prior to any changes to the CTA to ensure farmer voices were still being heard," said Gehl, who farms north of Regina. "After Sask Wheat and other farm groups met with the ministers of Transport and Agriculture last fall, we heard positive messages from the government on maintaining the MRE (Maximum Revenue Entitlement) and interswitching distances. We want to make sure farmers are still being heard and that our needs will be met by any upcoming CTA changes."

Sask Wheat, along with SaskBarley and the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan (APAS), formed a producers' coalition on grain transportation and submitted recommendations for the CTA Review Panel in December 2014 and in September 2016. Each submission recommended a full railway costing review, the maintenance of the MRE and called for mandatory reporting on grain handling and transportation system functionality.

The meetings with the federal officials gave Sask Wheat the opportunity to discuss the transition of the WCD to provincial wheat and barley commissions. The WCD, which funds wheat research and the Canadian International Grains Institute (Cigi), will be ending on July 31, 2017. Producers at Sask Wheat's AGM on January 11 approved the resolution to assume the \$0.48/tonne WCD check-off under the Sask Wheat check-off, which currently sits at \$0.52/tonne. The resolution also called for the continuation of funding for Cigi and wheat research currently funded through the Western Grains Research Foundation (WGRF).

"Moving to a single check-off means greater efficiency and accountability to Saskatchewan wheat producers and signals to the federal government that producers are committed to wheat research," says Gehl. "We took this message to Ottawa and emphasized the need for the federal government to remain invested in publicly-funded wheat research. We will find solutions to issues such as pests, diseases and environmental factors quicker and more precisely if there is a commitment from producers, governments and the private sector to fund wheat research."

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While in Ottawa, Sask Wheat discussed the need for improved information and market transparency with government officials. For an open and transparent market to function properly, information gaps in the Canadian system must be identified and steps must be taken to ensure that information such as free-on-board (FOB) prices and basis levels are available for the benefit of producers.

“Consistent, transparent and clear shipping information is critical for the farmers to move grain and improve market access,” says Gehl. “The need for better information and for the increased involvement of the federal government in collecting and distributing that information were key points that we stressed in these meetings.”

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