

Letter to Editor from Alex Atamanenko re future of the Canadian Wheat Board
November 17, 2006

Dear Editor:

As farmers move toward mailing their ballots in the upcoming Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) directors election they must reflect carefully on the conclusions reached in the Murray Fulton report, *The Canadian Wheat Board in an Open Market*. These conclusions state that when it comes to the marketing of western grain and barley there are only two viable options.

- 1) Retain single desk selling, price pooling, rail car allocations and government loan guarantees, under the Canadian Wheat Board or...
- 2) Relinquish the political and market power of the CWB and move toward a U.S. style open market but without the accompanying benefit of a US Farm Bill

These conclusions are supported by the Agriculture Minister, Chuck Strahl's own Task Force report, *Marketing Choice - The Way Forward* which attempted but failed to justify that the CWB can exist in a dual market or voluntary system.

Under the first option the CWB powers are retained, and if enough pressure can be brought to bear on elected politicians, western farmers might one day look forward to the implementation of the CWB's new proposal *Harvesting Opportunities*, which outlines a vision where many more value added and marketing opportunities for farmers of western grain and barley would be provided. This new policy paper put its emphasis on being entirely 'farmer controlled' and operating completely independent of government. In the meantime the Board would carry on as it does now with a mandate to market western grain and barley and return the profits to farmers.

The second option would see the CWB stripped of all legislative advantages and the immediate movement toward a US style open market would begin. This option would service the biggest players like US multinationals, who are waiting to step in and gain control of the situation the moment the Board's farmer monopoly power is removed.

The Conservative Party's terms "marketing choice", "dual marketing" and "voluntary CWB", have relentlessly been promoted as viable options to replace the current marketing structure of the CWB. These have now been rendered irrelevant by the conclusions of both of the above afore mentioned reports. Farmers must now be wary of any editorial comment, opinion piece, politician, or candidate running in the upcoming CWB directors' election, who continues to use this language when referring to marketing choices for wheat and barley.

The CWB has just filed a complaint with the CWB election coordinator requesting an investigation into the Minister's use of government resources to promote CWB director candidates currently campaigning on the Governments agenda. Perhaps the Minister should consider using his department's resources to clarify his mythical marketing choices, ensuring that all Western Farmers are fully informed about what their future will really look like without the advocacy of the Canadian Wheat Board.

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Alex Atamanenko, MP
BC Southern Interior
Please contact Alex Atamanenko at: BC only -1-800-667-2393 or 1-250-365-2792