

Alberta NDP

News release

For Immediate Release

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Farmers' Democratic Rights must be Protected

All farmers should have a say in CWB's future

Edmonton - The Alberta government has a responsibility to ensure that all farmers who have a stake in the future of the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) have their democratic rights protected, said NDP Opposition Agriculture Critic Ray Martin today.

"A plebiscite on the future of the CWB should include all farmers who use it to market their grains," said Martin. "No matter if a farmer is for or against the Wheat Board, their democratic rights should be protected and the Alberta government has the duty ensure that these democratic rights are not taken away."

Martin called for the Alberta government to lobby their federal counterparts to include all farmers in a vote on the future of the Canadian Wheat Board. If the Alberta government's lobbying efforts on behalf of farmers prove unsuccessful, then a non-binding plebiscite for farmers similar to Manitoba's should be considered.

"The federal government's list of anti-democratic behaviour with respect to the Wheat Board is staggering," said Martin. "The federal Tories have issued a gag order on the Wheat Board's executive. They have struck 16,000 farmers off the voters' list in the middle of the Wheat Board's elections, and now they're excluding wheat farmers from a decision on the Wheat Board's future."

"The provincial government has done nothing to counteract Ottawa's tactics," said Martin. "In fact the Agriculture minister has spent over \$1 million on an ideologically driven anti-Wheat Board marketing campaign."

"Even if the Alberta government is in favour of destroying the Wheat Board, they have a duty to put pressure on the federal government to ensure that farmers have the final say in how they want to market their grain. Rather than the federal

and provincial Conservatives deciding the Wheat Board's future, farmers should have the last word."

"If the provincial government is not willing to take on Ottawa, they should at the very least follow Manitoba's lead and allow Alberta's farmers to vote in a non-binding plebiscite," said Martin.

Martin pointed to studies commissioned by the Alberta government showing that the CWB would not be effective in a dual market, and argued that the choice for farmers is either market power with the Wheat Board, or free-falling prices without.

"On a decision as monumental as this, farmers - all farmers - must be trusted to make the right decision. So far, both the federal and provincial Conservatives have shown that they'd rather use strong-arm tactics than let farmers have a say," concluded Martin.

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Ray Martin will be available for comment at the Legislature between 11 am and 1 pm on Friday, November 3.

For more information:

Tony Clark

Communications Officer

780-916-3937

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#501 Legislature Annex, 9718-107 St, Edmonton, AB. T5K 1E4

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