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Government Misinformation about CWB Must Stop

Ottawa, ON: Alex Atamanenko, MP, BC Southern Interior, NDP Agriculture critic, accuses the government of deliberately lying when they say the CWB was a willing participant in Minister's Strahl's Government order to remove 36% of voters from the producers list.

"The government is repeatedly on record saying that the CWB agreed that it was a good idea to remove thousands of eligible voters from the producer voters list half way through the election. This is untrue. In fact the CWB were so concerned over the timing of the Ministerial order issued on Sept 21, 2006, they were immediately prompted to consult with lawyers", noted Atamanenko. "This government is deliberately trying to implicate the CWB in the government's undemocratic and ill advised instruction to tamper with the CWB director election process by changing the rules half way through".

In February, 2006 the CWB advised the government to act on recommendations put forward in November 2005 by an independent election review panel. "It is reprehensible that they have chosen to cast confusion over the whole democratic process instead of exercising this legitimate option in a timely manner. This indicates that their real intention is to disenfranchise voters by making it cumbersome for them to vote", observed Atamanenko. "Implicating the CWB as an accomplice to this government instruction is merely another arm of a strategy to discredit and undermine the farmer run organization. There is no other way to look at this".

Elections are currently underway in 5 districts and all have seen anywhere from 25 to 48% of voters removed from the voters list which is now comprised only of those who have sold grain through the CWB in the past 15 months. Some regions where up to 48% of voters have been removed are those who have been victims of flood, drought, or bad harvest weather. Other farmers are in the middle of a crop rotation, or simply haven't had time to sell their crops. "The Harper team is preying on farmers misfortunes in an attempt to remove their voices in this election, knowing that many will not fill out the complicated form and get it in on time", condemned Atamanenko.

In order to receive a ballot, those who have been removed from the list will now have to complete a statutory declaration, have it signed by a Commissioner of Oaths, who is difficult to find in some areas, and return it to the Elections Coordinator by November 17, 2006. This is causing some havoc with the candidates' nomination process. "What this has done is force candidates, who have already submitted their nominations, to make sure their nominators have re-qualified as eligible voters, or risk being removed from the race", stated Atamanenko.

The magnitude of government manipulation and misinformation in this election has been breathtaking", observed Atamanenko.

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