

***An open letter to Canada's Prime Minister,
Members of Parliament, and Senators,
from a broad and diverse coalition of 59
organizations representing millions of Canadians***

November 16, 2011

Support Canadian Food, Canadian Farmers, and the Canadian Wheat Board

Dear Prime Minister Harper, Members of Parliament, and Senators:

Bill C-18, if passed, will destroy the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB). Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz has repeatedly stated that he will not recognize the plebiscite recently conducted by the CWB, in which results were clearly in favour of keeping the CWB as the sole marketing agent for prairie wheat and barley intended for human consumption.

The CWB was created by an Act of Parliament, and is run by a 15-member Board of Directors, ten of whom are elected by farmers. The Wheat Board provides fair, equitable, reliable, and cost-effective services to farm families. It provides stability in uncertain times, and is a foundation of Canada's grain sector.

Ending the single desk authority of the CWB would throw western agriculture into turmoil and would transfer wealth created by Canadian farmers to big, private, often foreign-owned grain companies—money now returned to farmers, who spend it in their communities. The Minneapolis Grain Exchange has already changed its rules to allow for speculation in futures contracts for Canadian wheat and barley—a move which will increase price volatility for purchasers without providing any benefit to farmers.

Canada's political system is built on representative democracy. This means that the law, not merely the person in power, is to be respected and followed. The *CWB Act* is a law made by Parliament, and it requires a farmer vote before any substantive changes are made to the single desk authority. Our current government is ignoring this law—refusing to hold the required vote—and moving to eliminate the requirement for a vote. This is deeply concerning, as it strikes at the heart of our Canadian democracy.

We the undersigned:

- *Recognize the billions of dollars of economic value that the CWB creates each year—for farmers, rural communities, short line railroads, and the whole of Canada—as a result of its superior marketing ability, capacity to defend Canadian interests in trade disputes, and commitment to return to farmers all net proceeds from sales.*
- *Are proud of the strong international reputation for quality and reliability that Canadian wheat and barley have earned—a direct result of the CWB and its companion institutions, the Canadian Grain Commission and Canadian International Grains Institute.*

- *Deplore government's disregard for the outcome of the recent plebiscite in which 62% of farmers voted in favour of keeping the single desk for wheat and 51% supported keeping the single desk for barley.*

We therefore call upon the Prime Ministers, MPs, and Senators to immediately stop undermining the single desk authority of the CWB. We further insist that Parliament must comply with the Canadian Wheat Board Act, Section 47.1, which requires a binding plebiscite (vote) of farmers before any substantive change to the CWB's single desk authority is initiated.

Signed:

Agriculture Workers Alliance	Friends of the Canadian Wheat Board
All Saints Lutheran Church, Kelowna, BC	GE Watch Comox Valley
Bathurst Street United Church, Toronto	GRAIN
Big Carrot Natural Food Market	Grain Services Union (GSU)
Biofreedom	Greenpeace Canada
Brandon University Students' Union	Growing Food Security in Alberta
Briarpatch Magazine	Health Sciences Association of Alberta
Canadian Auto Workers (CAW)	Inter Pares
Canadian Biotechnology Action Network (CBAN)	International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 529
Canadian Labour Congress	Lardeau Valley Seed Savers
Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW)	Les AmiEs de la Terre de Québec
Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)	LIFT (Low Income Families Together)
Canadian Wheat Board Alliance	National Farmers Union
Catholic Women's League of Canada - St. James Parish Council	National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE)
CCNB Action (Conservation Council of New Brunswick)	New Brunswick Common Front for Social Justice
Centre for Social Justice	Ontario Public Interest Research Group (OPIRG) - Windsor
Coalition On The Niagara Escarpment	Organic Food Council of Manitoba (OFCM)
Community Action Belleville	Oxfam Canada
Council of Canadians	Plan B Organic Farms
Council of Canadians - Kelowna Chapter	Saskatchewan Federation of Labour (SFL)
Council of Canadians - Moose Jaw, Sask. Chapter	Saskatchewan Union of Nurses (SUN)
Council of Canadians - Prince Albert, Sask. Chapter	Society for a GE Free BC
Council of Canadians - Surrey, Langley, White Rock Chapter	The Ark Farm, B&B, Vegetables, & Native Plants
Council of Canadians - Winnipeg, Man. Chapter	Union paysanne
CWA/SCA (Communications Workers Union) Canada	United Church of Canada
Environmental Health Association of Ontario	United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW)
Food Action Committee of the Ecology Action Centre	Vancouver and District Labour Council
Food Secure Canada	