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**national farmers union**  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **REPORT RECOMMENDS CHANGES TO GRAIN COMMISSION MANDATE**

A review of the Canadian Grain Commission (CGC) released recently in Parliament is fundamentally flawed, says National Farmers Union (NFU) Vice-President Terry Boehm.

“It’s a hurried document that is long on platitudes and short on analysis,” stated Boehm. The report, prepared by Compas consulting group, contains a list of 70 recommendations, many of which could be called a “wish list” for grain companies.

“The historical mandate of the CGC since its inception has included the provision that it act on behalf of farmers to protect their interests against large grain companies,” said Boehm. The CGC also establishes and maintains high quality standards for Canadian grain which benefits not only farmers, but also grain companies and the country as a whole.

The Compas report, however, contains a recommendation which would fundamentally change the historical mandate of the CGC. “There has always been a recognition that the Commission needed to step in on behalf of farmers to prevent abuses in a marketplace dominated by large grain companies,” said Boehm. “There has been more, not less, concentration in the marketplace over the years. But this report is now saying that individual farmers and large companies should be regarded as economic equals, and the CGC should be an impartial referee.”

Boehm said this suggestion is a “perverse definition of democracy” because clearly multinational corporations are “more equal” due to their financial clout. “In other words, the CGC is supposed to deny the fundamental power imbalance that exists between an ordinary farmer and a large grain company when the farmer delivers his grain,” said Boehm. “In a true democracy, laws recognize that those who are socially or economically disadvantaged require protection from abuses.”

The revised mandate would provide farmers only with the right to complain after the fact.

The report calls for the CGC to be restructured so it would be governed by a Board of Directors that reports to a Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The report also recommends making inward inspections optional and contracting out inspection services; eliminating the Assistant Commissioner positions and establishing a separate Office of Grain Farmer Advocacy; and assigning “cost recovery” for individual services.

Boehm said one positive recommendation was retention of outward inspection and weighing by the CGC. He expressed concern, however, that this inspection service should continue to be done by CGC inspectors, and not contracted out.

Boehm noted while the report did recommend that all contracts include a statement of farmers' rights under the Canada Grain Act, those rights themselves would be fundamentally altered if other recommendations in the report were also adopted.

“In the long run, these recommendations would be harmful not only to farmers, but to grain companies and the nation as a whole,” he said. “What was most astounding was that at public meetings in Saskatoon and Regina, the consultants were told repeatedly to leave the CGC alone. However, these consultants dismissed the farmers' comments as being non-representative, and stated so in print.”

Boehm concluded the practice of the government contracting with private consultants to report on important issues undermines the democratic process. “In the not-too-distant past, legislative reviews of this magnitude would have been carried out by a Parliamentary Committee undertaking public hearings in many communities, and the debate would have been much more open,” he stated. “But the process now relies heavily on creating a barrier between citizens and government.”

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