

Friends of the Canadian Wheat Board

--a coalition of farmers and other Canadians in support of a democratic, farmer-controlled CWB

Friends of the CWB to launch court challenge to stop Minister Strahl's move to dismantle CWB

NEWS RELEASE

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WINNIPEG, Man.—The *Friends of the Canadian Wheat Board (FCWB)* today announced that they will file an application with the Federal Court to have Agriculture Minister Strahl's Order-in-Council removing barley from Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) jurisdiction declared null and void.

The court challenge asserts that Strahl's Cabinet Order has three strikes against it: it is *unlawful*, it is *undemocratic*, and the concept it advances is *unsustainable*. Those launching the suit also believe that, unless he is stopped, Strahl's moves against barley will be quickly followed by similar moves against wheat. The loss of the CWB's wheat and barley marketing advantages will cost a typical prairie grain farm more than \$10,000 per year.

Minister Strahl's Order-in-Council is *unlawful* because the changes to the CWB's barley marketing mandate he proposes cannot be made by Cabinet Order. Under Section 47.1 of the *Canadian Wheat Board Act*, such changes require legislative amendments passed in Parliament.

Strahl's actions to strip barley from the CWB are *undemocratic*. Under Section 47.1 of the *Act*, not only must the current legislation be amended in Parliament by democratically-elected MPs, but this must be preceded by consultation with the CWB's Board of Directors and a fair and transparent vote by barley producers. It was clear from the outset that Strahl's "consultation process" was designed to deliver a predetermined result. It began with a closed meeting of known anti-CWB individuals and ended with a flawed producer plebiscite which omitted safeguards essential for a fair and transparent vote: publicly-scrutinized voters' lists and vote counts, control on third party spending, a secret ballot, and a clear question. Parliament, under the direction of the Liberal government in 1998, handed control of the CWB over to farmers. Since coming to power in 2006, the Conservative government has systematically undermined farmer control of the CWB and replaced it with partisan political control.

The Minister's concept is *unsustainable*. Strahl's dual market or "market choice environment" which his Order-in-Council is supposed to create--and which he offered to farmers in his plebiscite--is designed to fail. History has conclusively demonstrated that a voluntary Wheat Board is unworkable and financially unsustainable. Past experiments with voluntary price pooling have resulted in taxpayers being left to cover millions of dollars in losses. Minister Strahl has not provided farmers with any analysis or a business plan on how his "dual market" would work.

The court action, launched by *Friends of the Canadian Wheat Board*, is being led by 12 barley producers from across the Prairies. It is supported by ordinary farmers whose livelihoods will be damaged by the federal government's ill-conceived Cabinet Order as well as ordinary Canadians concerned about fundamental democracy in the making of public policy. FCWB invites all democratically-minded citizens and organizations to support this action. Farmers and non-farmers who want to support this initiative can send donations to:

Friends of the Canadian Wheat Board, c/o 104 rue St. Pierre, St. Norbert, MB R3V 1J8.

Once filed, the legal documentation will be available from the Federal Court or by e-mail request to: abruun@campbellmarr.com

For more information, please contact:

Wilf (Butch) Harder, Lowe Farm, Manitoba
Stewart Wells, Swift Current, Saskatchewan
Lynn Jacobson, Enchant, Alberta
Art Macklin, Debolt, Alberta

(204) 746-8005 / 746-5049
(306) 773-6852 / 741-7694
(403) 739-2153 / 894-5208
(780) 957-2583 / 532-0677