



Recommendations on the Canadian Wheat Board Electoral Review

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Keystone Agricultural Producers (KAP) is Manitoba's largest general farm policy organization, representing thousands of farm families from across the province. As such, KAP welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback during the Canadian Wheat Board electoral review process.

As an organization that works on behalf of Western Canadian grain farmers, the CWB has an obligation to be accountable and transparent in its operations to these producers. The current make-up of the CWB board, which includes ten farmer-elected representatives, is essential to this obligation being carried forward. This review process ensures that the method in which these farmer-directors are elected is viewed as fair and reliable, and to ensure that producers can have confidence not only in the elections, but also their directors and the CWB.

KAP's Grains, Oilseeds & Pulses Committee discussed the points of interest for this review in some detail, and also conducted a survey of our membership to determine what, if any, revisions were required in the electoral process to ensure that it best met the needs of Manitoba producers. The following comments are the result of this process.

The majority of survey respondents indicated their satisfaction with the way that past CWB elections had been conducted and approve of the current preferential ballot system. However, a number of suggestions were also received that recommended how improvements could be made. KAP believes that the election process must continue to evolve to best meet the needs of producers and the changing nature of the grain farms in Western Canada.

Our members felt strongly that only producers who grow CWB-eligible grain should be allowed to vote, and that other "interested parties" should not be granted this right. KAP also believes that each permit book should have one vote in CWB elections, and that each farm should only have one permit book. In Manitoba, for example, this could be modeled similarly to Manitoba Crop Insurance Corporation's contracts.

KAP also believes that the current form of ten electoral districts should be maintained. However, our members indicated that the borders should be modified as required to ensure that the districts are equitable in terms of the number of eligible voters. Further, district boundaries should be based on permit book numbers, and be within a 10% size difference of one another.

The financing and supervision of CWB elections continues to be critical to ensure farmers'

confidence in the system. KAP believes that the current method of ensuring election accountability through election co-ordinators is sufficient. We also strongly recommend that there be an authority to audit the financial statements of both

candidates and third-party interveners. While this would become a cost to producers through the CWB, we believe that this concept has sufficient merit to warrant the expense.

KAP's committee and our membership believe that the \$15,000 spending limit established for candidates is adequate. Any in-kind contributions to election campaigns should also be included in this spending limit, and we further recommend that a limit of \$1,000 per contributor be established. We do not believe that financial assistance should be provided to candidates from the CWB. All candidates should have to identify all election contributors, to ensure the transparency of the process.

The timing of the election process is currently appropriate, as it is an opportune time for farmers to be involved. KAP recommends that these eligible voters be identified to candidates by name, mailing address, and phone number (if available).

KAP also believes that some level of restriction should be placed on CWB / board activities during the time frame from when candidate nominations close to the date when ballots must be postmarked. Actions undertaken by the board must not be seen to interfere with a fair election process.

We believe that, by accepting these recommendations, the CWB will be able to ensure that Western Canadian producers remain engaged in an electoral process that is fair, transparent, and accountable. KAP has welcomed the opportunity to provide our feedback on behalf of Manitoba's farmers, and would be pleased to discuss any of these issues in further detail.

Presented by Glenn Young, KAP Vice President