



WESTERN BARLEY GROWERS ASSOCIATION

A strong voice for a vibrant, market responsive barley industry in western Canada

97 East Lake Ramp NE -- Airdrie, AB T4A 0C3

Phone: (403) 912-3998

www.wbga.org Email: wbga@wbga.org

For Immediate Release

CANADIAN AGRICULTURE LOSES A LEADING BUSINESS

Airdrie, Alberta, September 26, 2016 - The Western Barley Growers Association (WBGA) was saddened by the news last week that Western Feedlots Ltd. will be suspending their operations in early 2017. Western's Board of Directors cited poor market conditions and a poor political environment in Alberta as some of the reasons for the shutdown. Western is one of the largest cattle feeding operations in Canada, with a capacity of 100,000 head in total at its' three feedlots near Strathmore, High River and Mossleigh. "It was a real shock to hear that one of the most successful livestock feeding companies in this country is shutting down," said Doug Robertson, President of the WBGA. "Western has always been one of the most innovative and forward-thinking companies in the industry, and to not have them there is a serious blow to our agriculture industry in Western Canada."

Minister Oneil Carlier, Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, said it was the job losses of the 85 employees he is most worried about. "We hate to see anyone in our industry lose their jobs, but the Minister should know that this is much bigger than just the jobs," continues Robertson. "Western is a leader in this industry, and to not have their voice at the table is detrimental - their decision will affect how other feeders will react to present conditions in the feeding industry. Add to that the ripple effect throughout the agriculture industry that this will have, from the packers to the farmers and consumers. For farmers it means a trusted buyer of over 250,000 tonnes of feed grain annually, is gone. Eighty percent of the barley produced in Western Canada is fed to livestock, so this is a big loss for farmers. For packers it means finding an alternative source of finished cattle. For consumers it means a trusted source of beef in Alberta is no longer there. For taxpayers in Alberta it means the loss of a successful business and its' tax revenue, at a time of huge deficit budgeting. This is so much more than just concerns around job losses. This government needs to understand that, and our agriculture industry."

Dave Plett, Western Feedlot's President and CEO also talked about the 'Alberta Advantage' the province once enjoyed, saying "of late, a number of moves (by the provincial government) have made it much more difficult to do business in Alberta as opposed to other jurisdictions." The Ag Minister replied to say they are "supporting the industry as we always have". The WBGA questions the Minister's statement. "Two of Alberta's largest industries, agriculture and petroleum, are facing new regulations and costs, and a climate of activism that is not positive to investment," says Robertson. "The Alberta Advantage was built on certain pillars: a provincial government that stood up for its industries on the world stage and encouraged investment in them; a regulatory system that was not driven by activism but by common sense; minimal red tape and clear rules that did not change on a whim; and a clear message that Alberta was open for business. The decision by Western is just one more indication that these pillars no longer stand. We believe it is the time for the Alberta government to change policy direction by reducing regulation, defending our industries here in Alberta and concentrate on creating a business environment that attracts investment. We have to send out the message, and back it up with actions that prove that 'Alberta Is Back and Open For Business'".

Western Barley Growers Association is a strong voice for a vibrant, market responsive barley industry in Western Canada.

For further comment, please contact:

Doug Robertson
President - WBGA
403-337-2077
dougarob@gmail.com