



WESTERN BARLEY GROWERS ASSOCIATION

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

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For Immediate Release

WBGA ECHOES FARMERS' CONCERNS ABOUT BILL 6

Airdrie, Alberta, December 2, 2015 - The Western Barley Growers Association (WBGA) is very concerned with the way Alberta's NDP government is rushing to pass Bill 6, which would enforce OHS and Labor standards on farmers across the province. "We had hoped we would get more information on this Bill once it was introduced, but the impact of this Bill on family farms has become more unclear with every passing Consultation Meeting", says Doug Robertson, President of the WBGA. "Today we heard the Premier laying blame on her civil servants for the misinformation farmers are hearing as they try to get answers about what this Bill really means for their livelihoods. This is unacceptable. The level of panic and distrust around this issue is the Government's fault. They did not properly brief their officials, the very people they entrusted to answer farmer's questions! Farmers and ranchers are concerned because this government did not attempt to consult with them before introducing this Bill. Instead the government is determined to ram the Bill through before the end of next week".

The secrecy surrounding the full meaning of this Bill is a point of contention for farmers and ranchers. Labour Minister Lori Sigurdson stated that "amendments to be introduced later will help clear up the confusion". "This is not acceptable", continues Robertson. "Farmers in Alberta are not willing to accept a 'just trust us and all will be well' answer. Farmers are onside with safety on our farms and ranches. We pay fair wages to ensure we have capable employees who are expected to operate expensive equipment and take care of our livestock with proper management. This Bill should focus on supporting best management practices which farmers are already doing on our farms instead of focusing on imposing union factory standards on our businesses. Farmers' hours and practices are governed by the weather and the needs of our livestock. This is not a 9 - 5 job. We need the leeway to plan for these and many other circumstances that are unique to farms.

The WBGA also rejects the definition the government is using to divide agriculture operations into either 'family farms', or, industrial 'corporate farms', which the Premier indicates this Bill will be targeting. "In most cases corporate farms are family farms, they are just larger farms run by farmers or ranchers. The larger farms or ranches operate with the same love of the land, livestock and respect for employees as smaller operations. It is time this government listened to farmers to design a Bill that will work on all of our farms, big or small. They should stop their attempt to divide and conquer farmers by pushing through a Labor Bill disguised as a Farm Safety Bill before Christmas."

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

For further comment, please contact:

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