

# The Attack on the Canadian Wheat Board: Seven Reasons Non-Farmers Should Care ... and Act

**Saving the Canadian Wheat Board matters to you. Losing the CWB will affect the food you serve to your family, your community's economy, and Canada's democracy.**

On October 18<sup>th</sup>, Prime Minister Harper introduced legislation, Bill C-18, to dismantle the Canadian Wheat Board. The majority of farmers oppose the Prime Minister's plan—farmers have repeatedly voted for a strong, effective CWB. Farmers are organizing and protesting. But to save our democratically controlled marketing agency, farm families need your help, and the help of the organizations with which you work.

The loss of the CWB will hurt *every* Canadian family. Here are seven reasons why non-farmer Canadian citizens should act to help protect the Wheat Board:

**1. Privatization and loss of economic control** Few sectors of the Canadian economy are 100% owned and controlled by Canadians. But one is: our multi-billion-dollar western wheat and barley marketing system. If the Harper government destroys the CWB, it will turn over to transnational corporations (most of them foreign) a critical sector of our economy that is now owned and controlled by Canadian citizens. **What C-18 takes away from farmers and other Canadians, it gives to grain giants such as Cargill.**

**2. Genetically modified food** In 2000, Monsanto moved to introduce genetically modified (GM) wheat. Farm organizations, environmental groups, and citizens' organizations banded together to stop Monsanto and keep GM wheat out of Canadian fields and foods. United, we succeeded. The CWB was a crucial ally. Many people and organizations believe that had it not been for the work of the CWB, Canadians would now be eating food made from GM wheat. **Lose the CWB and we may lose the fight to stop GM wheat.**

**3. Food Sovereignty** As an alternative to a globalized, long-distance, corporate-controlled food system, many Canadians are advocating Food Sovereignty, wherein farmers and all citizens collectively shape the food system we want for our families. The CWB is a good example of Food Sovereignty in action: a democratic agency controlled by food producers and citizens. By attacking the CWB, this government is pushing back hard against Food Sovereignty, serving notice that our future food system will be *more* far-flung, more corporate controlled. **A government hostile to the CWB is hostile to Food Sovereignty.**

**4. National sovereignty** Today, Canada has its own grain production, processing, handling, and transportation systems. Our Canadian Grain Commission sets and enforces quality standards—equal to the highest in the world. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency regulates new seed varieties, keeping harmful ones out and ensuring farmers have access to seeds that grow well in our climate. Most of our grain flows “east-west”, hauled by Canadian National and Canadian Pacific railways and loaded onto ships at Canadian ports by Canadian workers. If we destroy the CWB, other parts of our Canadian grain system will be destroyed in turn. As the government empowers US-based grain transnationals, those corporations will chafe against Canadian regulations and push for the destruction of our Grain Commission, seed regulations, and the rest of our quality and regulatory systems. **Destroying the CWB accelerates the Americanization of our grain and food systems.**

Worse, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), Chapter 11 gives US-based grain companies a veto over future attempts to rebuild our CWB. **If we destroy it, we can't get it back.**

**5. Your economy** The CWB is the cornerstone of our Canadian wheat and barley marketing, handling, and transport systems. Those systems create jobs:

- in Winnipeg where the CWB, the Grain Commission, the Canadian International Grains Institute, and other agencies are headquartered;
- in Thunder Bay, Ontario; Churchill, Manitoba; Vancouver, B.C.; and Montreal, Quebec; where Canadian export grain is cleaned, blended, and loaded onto ships; and
- across Canada as money is retained in this country and spent in rural and urban centres.

The CWB raises farmers' revenues by \$500+ million annually, money largely from foreign nations that is spent in urban and rural businesses across Canada. PriceWaterhouseCoopers calculated the CWB's total benefit to the Canadian economy at more than \$850 million annually. **Without the CWB, citizens and communities across the nation will suffer financially.**

**6. Our democracy** The vast majority of farmers want a strong, effective CWB. Farmers have reaffirmed that support in 10 votes—3 plebiscites and 7 sets of Directors Elections. Despite this, the Harper government is pushing forward to destroy the CWB. And it is doing so illegally. Section 47.1 of the *CWB Act* requires that farmers must vote in favour of major changes to the CWB. The government is ignoring that law and refusing to hold a vote. Also, the government is ramming its legislation through parliament, using closure to limit debate, refusing to let the Agriculture Committee examine the bill, and instead setting up an ad hoc committee to review the bill, but limiting that committee to just 5 minutes per section. Prime Minister Harper has announced he will “walk over” the farmer majority that support the CWB, and he has called his drive to dismantle the CWB a “train barrelling down a Prairie track.” Our federal government is sneering at democracy, evading due process, and bending the law to the breaking point. **If these antidemocratic tactics are not challenged, they will be repeated.**

**7. Farms and the land** The CWB raises farmers' prices and incomes. And the CWB provides equitable access to the market for *all* farmers, big or small. Losing the CWB will accelerate the loss of family farms. In so doing, it will concentrate farmland ownership in fewer and fewer hands. **A blow to the CWB is a blow to family-farm agriculture, and the men and women who produce our food.**

### **You can help protect our food supply, sovereignty, economy, and democracy**

Time is short. We need to act fast. But action takes just 15 or 20 minutes. What is needed right now is for Canadians to write two short letters:

- One to Prime Minister Harper, asking him to scrap Bill C-18, his destroy-the-CWB legislation, and to instead enact policies that foster Food Sovereignty and a strong Canadian nation and economy; and
- One letter to Canadian Senators, asking them to resist pressure to fast-track Bill C-18, and to instead give careful and adequate consideration to this detailed and far-reaching legislation; to hold meetings of their Agriculture Committee; and to hear presentations from farmers, workers, businesspeople, and other Canadians who will be affected by this legislation.

Contact information for the Prime Minister and Senators is:

**Hon. Stephen Harper**  
Prime Minister of Canada  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON  
K1A 0A2  
**FAX: (613) 941-6900**

**Canadian Senators**  
c/o the Clerk of the Senate  
Parliament Building  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A4  
**FAX: (613) 992-7959**

**If you have the capacity, please send your letters to Ottawa via fax. Time is short.**

**And please fax a copy to the NFU office: (306) 664-6226.**

**PLEASE MARK “SENT” ON THE COPY YOU SEND TO US**