



news release

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Imminent CN Rail strike would hurt farmers

Calgary, Alberta (September 28, 2010) – The Alberta Barley Commission urges the federal government to prevent negative impacts to the Canadian grain industry by immediately imposing binding arbitration to settle the pending CN Rail strike--and future rail labour disputes.

Although the Commission does not typically comment on labour issues, the potential harm this strike could have on the grain industry makes it imperative for farmers' voices to be heard.

“This stoppage could not come at a worse time,” says Commission CEO Mike Leslie. “Due to poor harvest conditions, the grain industry is facing serious quality issues resulting in poor grades and therefore values. The late seeding dates, cool wet summer, and even wetter fall with early frosts make it critical we have access to export markets. If not, the resulting flood of newly harvested feed grains trapped in Canada will drive prices to even lower than break-even.”

The grain industry is entering its peak period for crop movement. Overseas, the market is demanding Canadian feed grains and malt barley.

“A railway work stoppage would effectively hold Canadian grain hostage in Canada,” explains Leslie. “Without grain sales, farmers would go from having a really bad year due to weather to having a terrible year due to transportation.”

Rail freight is an essential service for Canadian farmers. The ability to deliver product overseas is the basis for many relationships with countries that aren't able to meet all their grain needs. These relationships are the cornerstone of Canada's reputation as a good place to do business.

“The associated lost opportunities and added costs due to a work stoppage will compound our quality issues,” says Leslie. “The government needs to take swift and decisive action to minimize the damage to Canadian industry, Canadian workers, farmers, and the broader economy.”

Canada's only barley commission, the Alberta Barley Commission is a not-for-profit organization directed, funded, and controlled by the province's 17,000 barley producers. The Commission coordinates and sponsors research, market development, technology-transfer and policy development on behalf of its producers.

***For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact
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