

WESTERN GRAIN ELEVATOR ASSOCIATION

Ste. 1320-220 Portage Ave.
WINNIPEG, Manitoba
R3C 0A5

Telephone: (204) 942-6835
Fax: (204) 943-4328
E-Mail: wgea@mts.net

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Grain Sector Appeals to Government to Modernize Port Governance

Winnipeg – The Western Grain Elevator Association (WGEA) announced today that the grain sector is embarking on a major campaign to raise awareness and seek solutions for outdated and problematic marine port governance rules.

“We are working in a port oversight system that simply lacks proper checks and balances, in contrast to what we have in rail or air transportation where there are tools available to hold people accountable for decisions,” said Wade Sobkowich, Executive Director of the WGEA. “With marine ports, we have no recourse to an adequate appeal mechanism, no outside dispute resolution, no independent complaint process, and no effective input to Director nominations – the federal government needs to address these shortcomings in the Port Modernization Review.”

Over the last couple of years, port terminal operators like the grain elevators have experienced some decisions that are unjustified and lack a deeper level of transparency necessary to hold decision makers accountable. Double digit annual rent increases, large but sometimes unsubstantiated ‘improvement fees’, and questionable priority setting on infrastructure spending are areas of concern. The dual role of Canadian port authorities as developer and regulator also places them in an apparent conflict of interest, which is something that the government should be looking at carefully. Lastly, as the federal government’s representative for port lands and operations, port authorities need to reconsider their role to help remove duplicative or overly restrictive sub-federal government regulations on port terminal operators.

“The Government of Canada needs to act on the major clean-up of marine port governance that was recommended during the review of the Canadian Transportation Act back in 2016-17,” continued Sobkowich, “This is having a large negative effect on our ability to unlock existing capacity and to grow the agri-food export sector.”

The WGEA is an association of grain businesses operating in Canada which collectively handle in excess of 90% of western Canada’s bulk grain exports. For more information, see the WGEA’s port issues overview found here: www.wgea.ca

Media Enquiries: Wade Sobkowich, wgea@mts.net or (204) 942-6835