

Thank you, Ken, and thank you to the members of Committee for the invitation to appear before you today.

As Ken mentioned in his comments, the Minister has initiated a process that will result in the termination of my position as President and CEO at the CWB. In the four years I have held this position, I can say without hesitation that I have acted in a manner that is consistent with the laws as laid out in the *CWB Act*. I can also state unequivocally that I have executed to the best of my abilities the policies developed and adopted by the farmers of Western Canada through their elected representatives on the CWB's board of directors. I have always believed that it was the CWB's mandate and mission to use all of its powers and all of the tools at its disposal to create a sustainable competitive advantage for farmers. I have devoted all of my energies to achieving this mission and I wish to express my gratitude to Ken and the other elected directors on the board who have devoted their energies to the same cause.

There have been charges that I have failed to plan for contingencies and, more specifically, for the possible elimination of the single desk. This is blatantly false. The CWB's board of directors, on numerous occasions, has been through strategic planning exercises where the full range of options for the CWB's future have been examined. Among these, the possible elimination of the single desk has been advanced, discussed and analyzed as seriously and as thoroughly as any other alternative.

What I would like to know is: Where is the Minister's plan? When is he going to consult with the board of directors on the plebiscite as required under the Act? Is he going to respect farmers' decision when they vote in a barley plebiscite? If he moves on barley, how and when will he introduce legislation and what will that legislation look like?

Comments were made earlier this week that the CWB should stick to marketing. I want to say that the staff at the CWB remain focused on the task they have for western Canadian farmers. Our team continues to field thousands of calls each week from farmers, arranging logistics to move this crop from the Prairies, working with customers on the technical merits of farmers' products and concluding sales of these products. We have a very strong sales program in place and are doing the job farmers want us to do.

Lastly, I would like to comment on the impact that all of this uncertainty about the CWB's structure, mandate and leadership is having on our customers throughout the world. The CWB, as Ken said, is a multi-billion dollar corporation with sales to over 70 countries worldwide. We have very strong business relationships with customers that have been built up over time. The kinds of changes that the government is contemplating and talking about publicly are disruptive to many of these relationships. Sooner or later, sales will be lost and the farmers of Western Canada are going to suffer. In light of this risk, I can only add my voice to Ken's in calling for a process that is mindful of protecting farmers' short and long-term economic interests.

Thank you.