

Canada Grain Act Discussion Group (CGADG)
General information meeting minutes

July 23/25

Call participants: 19 participants at peak: 15 members plus 2 speakers and 2 non-farmer committee members (Bruce Dodds, Bob Roehle). No fewer than 17 participants at any point over the course of the meeting.

Meeting began on Zoom at 9:00 AM SK time, Cam Goff chairing. Cam informed participants that the meeting would be recorded.

Agenda approved as presented without objection

Chair's report:

Chair Cam Goff outlined the background and goals of CGADG, emphasizing our non-partisan orientation and strict commitment to the farmer interest. He then described CGADG's history of involvement in Canada Grain Act issues including participation in the Canada Grain Act Review, initiating the Canada Grain Act Summit, pursuing an Access to Information request to release all submissions to the CGA Review, discussing farmers' research concerns with professors at the Universities of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, meeting with the CGC commissioners, our recent letter to the new Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, and recruiting a paying membership to pursue research in the farmers' interest on issues like producer polling and potential loss of the primary elevator wheat test-weight.

Field rep report:

Field rep Bruce Dodds reported that his recruitment work has been unable to reach its goal of 50-100 \$1,000 farmer members and is currently stalled at 39 members, despite numerous trips across Manitoba and Saskatchewan and two trips to Alberta. Bruce noted that almost no one has argued against our concerns but memberships have not been as forthcoming as he had hoped. Bruce believes further income may come from word-of-mouth membership interest or from grants associated with research (i.e. the Canadian Sustainable Agricultural Partnership). Bruce said the good news is that CGADG has collected sufficient funds to pursue one, maybe even two, research projects, in partnership with other farm organizations. Bruce hoped the meeting would consider these options.

Discussion: There followed a discussion about the difficulty of engaging younger farmers in farm organization. Cam Goff noted the loss of collective knowledge with the passing of the Pools. Curt Lammers said high prices in recent years have clouded many farmers' understanding of the importance of staying involved to protect themselves when times are tough. Ian Robson pointed out the orientation to maximum production rather than protecting farmer rights. Dean Harder cited the disconnect between farm organization and many younger producers. Don Meier cited "baptism by fire" as often the only way that younger farmers come to understand the perils of the system, noting farmers have lost many rights over the last 30 years.

Treasurer's report:

Treasurer Cam Goff reported that there is currently \$24,520 in CGADG's credit union account and another \$500 in receivables for a total of \$25,020. Bruce Dodds is owed \$2,600 for unbilled work as field rep, leaving a balance of \$22,420.

Guest speaker – Patty Rosher, former Assistant Chief Commissioner, CGC: Patty's went to the trouble of preparing a power-point for this meeting, which she entitled *Unpopular opinions about the CGC*. Patty first described the "cooling off" period for former commissioners during which they are barred from representing other parties doing business with the Commission, going on to describe the process after former commissioner Jim Smolik was accused of misusing his past connections to the Commission. The subsequent investigation found Smolik was clearly guilty, resulting in censure but no fine. Patty went on to describe her own experience with accusations of wrongdoing, which included review of much of her correspondence as commissioner. These accusations were all subsequently shown to be unfounded.

Patty then outlined CGC issues which she has written about on her Substack site entitled *The Chesterfield*. First of these issues was governance concerns at the CGC. Patty believes the three-person commissioner structure is too small and has become ineffective. She also believes the commissioner positions, as currently constituted, are only part-time jobs. Moreover, the chief commissioner/chair shouldn't also be the CGC's CEO. This combined position, in Patty's experience, is an invitation to misuse, including the withholding of information from staff and other commissioners, and delay of meetings to prevent decisions from being made. Patty cited potential alternatives such as a board of directors, an enlarged part-time director complement or implementation of recommendations from the recent Compass Report, but warned governance change will be a big hurdle for the Commission. Patty also believes the CGC's current role in outward inspection should be privatized, and closed her talk by calling for the introduction of AI, in the form of the long-awaited black box, to replace error-prone human grading in the CGC regulated system.

Guest speaker – James Lokken, former policy manager, SaskWheat: James began by calling on the CGC to replace Patty's currently vacant, Assistant Chief Commissioner position at the Commission. He then went on to call for increased fluency in the Act among CGC staff and for the Commission to implement SaskWheat's demand for a farmer majority on the Western Grain Standards Committee. This could be achieved without legislative or regulatory change by the CGC using its discretionary powers to appoint farmers to three of the four seats it controls. With regard to wheat test-weights, James says the Act is quite clear in providing a rationale for separating primary and export standard test-weights, noting that even if the Act is not explicit about this, it makes good arguments why it should be so.

James went on to outline why farmer declarations at primary elevators should not be combined in one document, as is currently the case. Rather, the CGC should manage its own declaration system, separate from the grain companies' documents. James also asserted that the Act provides ample latitude for the CGC to investigate and arbitrate grain contracts. With regard to the Canada Grain Act Review, all industry briefs should be made public and James called the CGC's "what we heard" precis document a travesty, insisting participation groups should be obliged to speak

for themselves. James also called out the CGC's repeated claims that the Commission has no responsibility to undertake economic analysis, declaring that "everything the Commission does is economic" and pointing out that it used to do this work but stopped – just as they used to employ in-house economists but now have only one. Evidence of this low state of affairs is the way in which CGC approved the rapidly withdrawn test-weight change in 2023 despite the lack of any economic analysis of the impact. This change was only reversed through concerted protest by producers in the face of intense industry lobbying.

Discussion: There followed a lengthy discussion/debate of the Rosher and Lokken presentations. James said he disagreed with Patty about the commissioner positions being part-time jobs, pointing out that there is much more work the commission should be doing for farmers, especially a more pro-active presence in the country. Patty responded that the commissioners are currently barred from digging into issues in the countryside. James said a real conversation needs to be had with the Commission regarding CGC oversight vs. grain company self-regulation because the CGC has backed off from anything beyond cursory oversight. Patty responded that it would be interesting to learn from polling what's actually happening in the driveway – whether or not there really is intimidation of producers at the elevator – noting, for example, that the CGC doesn't currently have this information.

Lynn Jacobson asked Patty how the CGC might go about increasing regulation at primary and country elevators and James asked after inspection of container grain for export. Patty said containers are already subject to outward inspection. However, it was Patty's view that inward inspection and primary/terminal weigh-overs were all things that occurred at the CWB's request and there is no longer any need for them. Finally, Glenn Tait supported Patty in looking forward to the use of AI in grading. Glenn said that visual kernel distinguishability [VKD] is an art (as opposed to a science) and believes a more technical approach would reduce arbitrary decisions at the elevator. Patty indicated the CGC doesn't appear to be proactively investigating its place a new or revised system.

CGADG future directions – membership group discussion

Current work – future options: Bruce Dodds outlined a list of outstanding research projects in the farmer interest that CGADG would like to see undertaken by the CGC. These include:

- investigate of the accuracy of post-2012 grade/dockage valuations by primary elevators
- monitor the farmer share of export grain prices on an ongoing basis
- determine the cost to farmers of loss of primary (vs. terminal) test-weight as promoted by the WGEA (and not, to date, repudiated by the CGC)
- commission an independent poll of producer satisfaction with the current deregulated grade/dockage CGC oversight system (CGC hasn't polled producers since 2017)

Bruce said a comprehensive, statistically accurate, 600-respondent poll could likely be undertaken for something in the range of \$40,000 through the University of Saskatchewan call centre, according to discussions he and Bob Roehle have had with a knowledgeable academic. CGADG would propose sharing the cost of the poll with at least two partner organizations. Accuracy is achieved by dividing the Prairies up by crop insurance districts and making a representative number of calls to each district. Typically, 10 calls are required for each suitable

response (i.e 6,000 calls for 600 responses, for example). Bruce also suggested there might be enough money left to undertake some work on the test-weight issue, also in partnership with other farm organizations.

Cam asked the group what their thoughts were. Lorne Scott reported that an environmental group he works with engaged the firm Insightrix at a much lower price to undertake an 800-call, three question survey. Patty Rosher offered several pieces of advice, indicating she attempted to conduct focus groups with farmers but her initiative didn't get off the ground. She advised that CGADG and its partners ask questions about the farmer delivery experience, also the competitive environment ("How competitive are the elevators?") Patty also advised checking in with the Competition Bureau as the rationale for CGC oversight has to do with the unequal bargaining power situation between farmer and grain companies. Patty thought a CGADG poll could potentially be very useful.

Chair Cam Goff asked for a resolution:

Motion: that CGADG conduct a poll, with partners, to sample producer views on their dealings with grain companies and CGC, and, if funds are available beyond the poll, also investigate a study of the impact for farmers of loss of the primary test-weights. Moved: Lorne Scott.
Seconded: Curtis Lammers. Carried.

CGADG website: Bruce Dodds explained that CGADG's website will come up for renewal at the end of July 2025. Bruce said the website isn't widely used but farmers and others do refer to it when evaluating our organization and suggested if CGADG is going to continue the website should continue also. Dean harder questioned the cost and Bruce explained that host Aj Thakker does all the posting as well as hosting the site. Dean advised we may want to consider alternative arrangements in future years. Dean and Lynn Jacobson also emphasized the importance of keeping the site up to date.

Chair Can Goff asked for a motion:

Motion: that CGADG extend its website for another year at a cost of approximately \$1600.
Moved: Lynn Jacobson. Seconded: Horst Schreiber. Carried.

Letter to Minister MacDonald: the meeting was given an opportunity to comment on the current draft. There were no objections to sending the letter.

Executive elections:

Chair: Glenn Tait allowed his name to stand as temporary chair. Nominated by Bob Roehle.
Seconded by Lyn Jacobson. Carried. [Note: Glenn made clear he is unable to fulfill the chair role through an entire term and is relying on CGADG to see he is replaced in the short term.]

Treasurer: Cam Goff volunteered to continue as CGADG treasurer.

Secretary: Bruce Dodds volunteered to continue as CGADG secretary.

Other business:

Letter to Minister: the committee agreed that the current draft, already approved, be mailed to the Minister by Canada Post.

Closing

Chair Cam Goff offered his view that CGADG had made progress as a result of this meeting and thanked everyone on the call for their participation.

Following a short discussion, meeting participants decided that the Zoom recording should only be made available to CGADG members. +

This meeting ended at 12:05 PM SK time.

**Bruce Dodds
CGADG secretary
July 31, 2025**