



News Release

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Grain Commission funding cuts mean higher producer costs: Safety and quality threatened

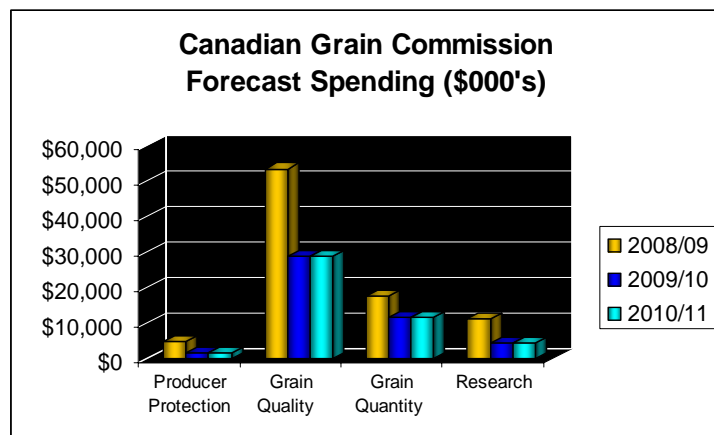
Ottawa – Conservative government plans to drastically reduce Canadian Grain Commission spending will hurt grain producers and Canada's international reputation for quality, according to three former senior officials of the federal agency and the Agriculture Union which represents employees of the CGC.

A new government spending forecast released this morning comes to light a day before Agriculture Minister Ritz is scheduled to testify on his department's spending before the Commons Agriculture Committee.

A spending forecast published by the federal government shows Grain Commission producer protection programs will be slashed by 67% while grain quality programs will be reduced by almost half and research programs will be cut by 60%.

"As Ottawa's contribution goes down, producer costs will rise," said Albert Schatzke, a former Commissioner of the Canadian Grain Commission.

The spending forecast is in line with a Conservative government legislative proposal – Bill C-39 – which would gut the Grain Commission's inspection, weighing and independent oversight that ensures producers are treated fairly.



Source: Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, 2008-09 Reports on Plans and Priorities

The Canadian Grain Commission protects producers by ensuring their grain shipments are accurately weighed and graded so growers are properly paid. The Commission's independent arbitration process levels the playing field between individual producers and the powerful grain companies they must deal with when disputes arise.

"These cuts will undermine grain producers in their dealings with grain companies, which have never been more powerful. Canada's reputation for top quality grain will be hurt too. You can't protect producers and make these cuts at the same time," said Bob Douglas.

These Commission activities would be eliminated by Bill C-39, against the unanimous advice of the all-party Commons Agriculture Committee which recently completed a study on the future of the Grain Commission.

Product safety is another important role of the Canadian Grain Commission.

Inward inspections conducted by the CGC before grain gets into the terminal elevator system identify dangerous contaminants like mercury and fungi such as ergot and fusarium -- bio hazards that are extremely dangerous to human health. Inward inspections also offer early warning alerts of the presence of glass, metal shavings, rocks and other safety hazards in grain shipments arriving at terminal elevators, as well as bug infestations. C-39 would kill inward inspection services by the Grain Commission.

"At a time when food safety is a top priority for Canadians, Bill C-39 is undermining the safety of Canadian grain products," said Donna Welke.

"The Agriculture Union calls on the Government to withdraw this flawed legislation. Minister Ritz should also instruct the Canadian Grain Commission to, at the very least, maintain the level of service it now provides to producers," concluded Bob Kingston, Executive Vice-President of the Agriculture Union (PSAC).

Albert Schatzke was Commissioner of the Canadian Grain Commission (1997-2006); Donna Welke is the former Assistant Commissioner from Saskatchewan (1994 - 2006), Bob Douglas is the former Assistant Commissioner from Manitoba (2000 – 2006)

The Agriculture Union – PSAC represents 9500 people who work at Agriculture Canada, the Canadian Grain Commission, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, and other workplaces.

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