



Media Statement on Rail Transportation

OTTAWA, March 1 - Farmers from across Canada are in Ottawa to convey a unified message that urgent action is required to prevent another grain crisis in Western Canada.

Farmers are already feeling the pain of plummeting rail service and need the Senate and House to pass Bill C-49 as soon as possible. Parliament must act to avoid a repeat of the 2013-2014 grain crisis, where grain producers lost billions of dollars due to the inability of railways to transport their grain to exporters in a timely manner.

Farmers in Western Canada only get paid when they deliver grain. The lack of grain movement is putting hard working farm families in a position where seed, fuel and fertilizer bills must go unpaid and where they do not know if they can make rent and mortgage payments. As rail service goes from bad to worse the situation is getting increasingly dire on farms on the Prairies.

Farms are seriously concerned about the state of rail service in Canada, as shipping performance has been steadily deteriorating over the winter months. During the week of February 11th, CN Rail only supplied 17% of rail cars ordered by grain companies.

The majority of farmers are restricted to only one available rail company for shipments, leaving them no options other than to watch while their grain sits unsold. This is unacceptable, but today the grain industry has no tools to hold railways to account. That needs to change, Bill C-49 needs to be passed.

Bill C-49 includes measures to increase competition and accountability in the rail system, and provides farmers with some tools to help address problems with grain rail shipments. The Bill has been moving slowly through the Parliamentary process since last September. While the Senate is considering amendments to the bill that will make it more meaningful, farmers need the Senate to complete this review quickly so that the legislation can be moved through the House and implemented before spring seeding begins.

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