



The Honourable R.J. Sigurdson
Minister of Agriculture and Irrigation
Government of Alberta
Legislature Building
10800 - 97 Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta T5K 2B6

Re: Potential Labour Disruptions at the Vancouver Port and the Impact on Alberta’s Agriculture Sector

Dear Minister Sigurdson,

We are writing to bring to your attention the potential labour disruption at the Port of Vancouver and to request your assistance in advocating for the uninterrupted movement of agricultural commodities across Canada and through our ports. The situation demands swift intervention to prevent a significant negative impact on Alberta’s agricultural sector, particularly in relation to grain and oilseed exports.

The pending dispute between grain handling companies and the Grain Workers Union (GWU) is of great concern. The union has voted overwhelmingly in favor of strike action, and without timely resolution, disruptions could occur as early as September 17, 2024. Thousands of farmers across Alberta, who rely on smooth transportation channels, will face serious consequences if this labour action proceeds.

Although the labour dispute is based at the port, the provisions of section 87.7(1) of the Canada Labour Code—meant to safeguard the movement of grain—are limited in scope, applying only to the loading and unloading of ocean vessels. However, GWU employees perform essential tasks inside the terminal, such as unloading railcars, maintaining terminal operations, inspecting grain, and overseeing its quality before loading it onto vessels. We ask the Federal Minister of Labour invoke section 108.1(1) of the Canada Labour Code (see below) for a directed vote by the union members, on a very reasonable offer – and the Minister to take all reasonable steps under the Canada Labour Code to help avoid disruptions. A work stoppage would critically disrupt these operations, impacting the entire supply chain.

Alberta’s agriculture sector is already facing shipping challenges from the rail strike, particularly in the canola market. The recent drop in prices following China’s anti-dumping investigations is one example. As China has been our largest buyer of Canadian canola seed, the price drop is precipitated by the impending Chinese response to Canadian tariffs on electric vehicles. Now there is a limited





window to ship canola, and any disruption at the port will further jeopardize Alberta's ability to meet export demands, especially following the rail service disruptions earlier this summer.

Canada is at risk of developing a reputation as an unreliable supplier in the global market. If this disruption is not averted, it will reinforce that perception among our trading partners. A reliable supply chain is critical, and it is essential that the federal government finds a sustainable solution to maintain the country's credibility in global trade.

We would greatly appreciate your support in raising this urgent matter with the Federal Ministers of Agriculture, Transportation and Labour. Ensuring a swift and fair resolution is vital for the health of Alberta's agriculture industry and Canada's international reputation as a reliable exporter.

Thank you for your time and attention to this pressing issue.

Sincerely,

Team Alberta Crops

Tara Sawyer, Chair
Alberta Grains

Curtis Miedema, Chair
Alberta Beekeepers

Roger Chevraux, Chair
Alberta Canola Producers Commission

Shane Strydhorst, Chair
Alberta Pulse Growers

Brian Ellis, Chair
Alberta & BC Seed Growers

Gary Tokariuk, Chair
Alberta Sugar Beet Growers

Alison Davie, Chair
Potato Growers of Alberta





Cc. Honourable Devin Dreeshen, Minister of Transportation and Economic Corridors
Honourable Matt Jones, Minister of Jobs, Economy and Trade

