



CHAIR'S REPORT

ADVOCATING FOR IMPROVEMENTS TO RAIL TRANSPORTATION

D'Arcy Hilgartner, APG Chair

My duties as Chair of Alberta Pulse Growers (APG) extend beyond being a farmer and planning for the growing season, to serving as an advocate for improvements in areas such as rail transportation that benefit all of us.

The concerns that Alberta pulse producers have with the current rail transportation system have been communicated with law makers by APG, Pulse Canada, Canadian Special Crops Association (CSCA), and others. At the time of this writing, Bill C-49, the Transportation Modernization Act, has just been passed. This is such a relief because we need to be able to count on our rail system to reliably move our agricultural products to ports and to the market by the time this growing season's production comes off the field.

APG, along with Pulse Canada and CSCA, expects the passage of Bill C-49 to bring better service for Canadian shippers by providing a framework for improving Canada's transportation system.

This Act introduced reciprocal penalties into Service Level Agreements, replaced extended interswitching with a new "long-haul interswitching" provision, provided the Canadian Transportation Agency with own-motion inquiry powers on systemic or emerging rail freight issues under guidance from the Minister of Transportation, redefined

adequate and suitable service, and changed Maximum Revenue Entitlement calculations to promote railway investment in hopper cars.

The true measure of the success of the changes to the Canadian Transportation Act will be in how they deliver measurable improvements in service performance and reliability. A key outcome of Bill C-49 is the launch of a regulatory process to develop rail service and performance indicators. The development of a comprehensive data regime to hold players accountable for their performance and track progress towards achieving the goals of the Transportation 2030 strategy is essential.

With the passage of this bill, the industry must now turn its attention to developing the work plan and comprehensive performance measurement system that meet the needs of individual companies and industries, and deliver what is intended with this legislation.

Transportation was one of several impediments to ag sector growth that were raised by attendees like myself who were invited by Andre Corbould, the new Deputy Minister for Alberta Agriculture and Forestry, to a roundtable meeting to discuss barriers to economic growth for our sector. In addition to transportation, market access, the Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) and Health

Canada, which fall under federal jurisdiction, the people present also listed labour constraints and carbon tax as major barriers.

Meanwhile, APG is on track to reduce its levy to 0.75% from 1% on August 1, 2018, as were the wishes of the majority of members who cast a vote at the annual general meeting in January. APG is pursuing implementation with the Alberta Agricultural Products Marketing Council, and working to make sure that the organization will be in good shape to continue participating in advocacy, education, research and other member priorities after the levy reduction takes effect.

Despite the growing season being off to a late start in many parts of Alberta, I hope that you all have healthy crops coming up by the time this magazine reaches you.

I also look forward to seeing many of you at the crop walks in which APG participates. This edition of *Pulse Crop News* normally includes a listing of pulse-related crop walks for the summer, but organizers have indicated that they are waiting to set dates until they could reasonably determine when there would be well-established crops to see. Check the Events section of APG's website at www.albertapulse.com/event/ for more information on crop walks near you.

