



**BY KYLE LARKIN**  
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## Grain farmers bring their priorities to Ottawa

Grain Growers of Canada brought grain farmers from across the country to Ottawa in October for its annual Grains Week, a concentrated week of meetings on Parliament Hill and stakeholder engagement that places producer priorities directly in front of federal decision makers.

With federal policies shifting across trade, transportation, research and taxation, the conversations held during Grains Week offered an important opportunity to ensure the realities of growers were fully understood by those shaping the national agenda.

This year's event included more than 30 meetings with Ministers, Secretaries of State, Members of Parliament, Senators and senior staff, followed by an evening reception that drew more than 150 guests from across Parliament Hill. Producers were grouped regionally so they could speak to both shared challenges and issues unique to their farm, giving parliamentarians a clear understanding of how policy decisions affect grain operations across Canada.

The week began with a breakfast meeting with Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Heath MacDonald. Producers outlined the pressures currently facing the sector and discussed how federal decisions affect market access, operational planning and the future of family farms.

From there, members moved through a full day of back-to-back meetings that included the Leader of the Official Opposition, Pierre Poilievre, Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister, Kody Blois, and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Sophie Chatel.

Additional discussions were held with Finance Committee Chair Karina Gould, Secretary of State for Rural Development Buckley Belanger, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance Ryan Turnbull and long-standing agri-

cultural advocates in the Senate, including Senators Robert Black and Mary Robinson.

Across each meeting, members delivered a consistent message about the pressures affecting grain operations and the practical steps needed from the federal government. A central theme was the importance of defending tariff free access to key markets, with trade disruptions carrying direct consequences for farm income and long-term planning.

Producers highlighted that with more than 70% of Canadian grain exported each year, uncertainty in relationships with major partners, particularly the United States and China, jeopardizes our global competitiveness and limits farm incomes. Members encouraged the government to keep agriculture at the forefront of trade discussions and to take a proactive approach as the 2026 CUSMA review approaches.

Transportation and infrastructure were equally significant themes. Producers outlined how Canada's grain supply chain continues to face strain, with aging infrastructure around key corridors placing the system at risk of delay. Bottlenecks at ports, especially at the Port of Vancouver, and along critical rail routes reduce the sector's ability to move grain efficiently and weaken Canada's position as a dependable supplier.

These discussions emphasized the need for federal attention to rail bridges and port infrastructure so producers can meet the expectations of domestic and international customers without unnecessary disruption.

Research and innovation added another important dimension. Farmers raised concerns about declining public investment in agricultural research and the impact this has on breeding programs needed for yield gains, disease resis-

tance and improved genetics. They encouraged renewed federal support for Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada's breeding and innovation work and stressed the importance of ensuring farmers remain closely involved in shaping research priorities that directly affect their operations.

Taxation and succession planning rounded out the discussions. Members noted that the scheduled capital gains increase continued to create uncertainty for family operations preparing for transition. Following sustained advocacy during Grains Week, the proposed capital gains increase was formally canceled in Budget 2025.

The momentum carried into the evening at our parliamentary reception, which brought together parliamentarians, stakeholders and partners.

The reception allowed conversations from earlier in the day to continue in a more informal setting, and gave producers an additional opportunity to reinforce the priorities raised in meetings. We were also pleased to have Minister Heath MacDonald deliver brief remarks, adding thoughtful perspective to the day's discussions.

Beyond the meetings on Parliament Hill, producer priorities were visible across Ottawa. Advertisements downtown

and in *The Hill Times*, along with targeted digital outreach, reinforced key themes of the week.

The week also included a meeting of GGC's Board of Directors, our Annual General Meeting, and participation in several stakeholder receptions, where members connected with industry partners and discussed emerging issues shaping the year ahead. To cap off the week, we were able to celebrate the association's first ever recognition, receiving a Canadian Society of Association Executives (CSAE) Award of Excellence for our Protect Family Farms campaign that opposed the capital gains tax increase.

By the end of the week, members had spoken directly with political leaders and senior officials across government and provided a clear outline of the policy conditions needed to support the long-term competitiveness of Canada's grain sector. Together, these conversations reaffirmed a shared commitment to strengthening the future of Canadian agriculture.

As parliamentarians consider upcoming legislative and policy decisions, the conversations held during Grains Week offered a clear picture of the practical realities producers face and the decisions that shape their ability to compete in global markets. 🌿



Left to Right: GGC Policy Manager Kate Sauser, Dale Leftwich of Sask Oilseeds, MP Sophie Chatel, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, Robert Semeniuk of Alberta Pulse Growers, Sally Parsonage of Manitoba Crop Alliance and GGC 1st Vice-Chair Jake Leguee, Sask Wheat.