



2023 AGRICULTURE DAYS AT THE BC LEGISLATURE

October 24, 2023 – BC Grain Producer representatives Ernest & Margret Wiebe, Les & Hannah Willms and Jennifer Critcher joined 60 farmers, ranchers and industry leaders in Victoria this past week. Nearly 40 face-to-face meetings were attended to share key messages with cabinet ministers, MLAs, and other government stakeholders. The goal of BC Agriculture Council's (BCAC) annual Ag Day in Victoria to emphasize their commitment to bringing healthy and quality food and plants to the homes of British Columbians.

BCAC is the lead industry advocate for key sector-wide priorities in British Columbia. BCAC is comprised of 28



member associations which in turn represent 96% of farm gate sales in the province. This event is an annual opportunity for BC farmers and ranchers to bring a united voice to Victoria to not only address challenges in the sector but also showcase the great things that are being done to create financial and environmental resiliency. This year's discussions focused on producer-led solutions to address Water and increased cost of production. BC Grain farmers and Ag Day attendee Les Willms said "I appreciate BCAC for organizing AG Day. Collaboration from all sectors in BC Agriculture is contributing to having a positive influence on BC politics. The key messages of water security and costs of Production were acknowledged and heard by all members of the Legislature"

BC Grain directors met with Pam Alexis, BC Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries. In alignment with BCAC key messages topics discussed during the meeting were the high cost of production including fertilizer, equipment and fuel, specifically the carbon tax on fuel used in all aspects of grain farming. It was specifically addressed how should the federal Bill C234 be approved that BC Grain producers will be yet another disadvantage to our counterparts in Alberta. Additional topics brought to the minister were the need for increased investment in on farm field scale research, ministry staff in the north and adaptation programs.

Creating awareness of transportation challenges in the North is always priority for our association, director Ernest Wiebe was able to meet with Rob Fleming, BC Minister of Transportation and Highways. Although key messages were top of mind during this meeting Ernest was able to touch on ageing road and rail infrastructure in the north, and the financial pressure the class 1 driver's license regulations are putting on farmers. Investment in critical infrastructure in the North, such as the replacement of the Taylor Bridge was also brought forward.

"BC Ag day is a great avenue to connect industry with government. I believe our meetings last year set foundation for the Ag minister to visit the BC Peace Region this past August. This year's meetings we were able to build on those relationships we have with the ministers and their staff. We were able to talk about relevant issues affecting our membership and possible solutions that can make a difference." BCGPA Director Hannah Willms

As a current director of BC Ag Council, Jennifer Critcher was asked to join two other agriculture representatives to meet with BC Premier David Eby. Key messages of water and high cost of production were discussed with Premier Eby, Critcher was able to bring forward the effects of carbon tax and spoke to bill C234.



Additional meetings were had with MLA's from all over the province with representatives from BC United, BC Conservative and NDP caucus's. When asked to comment of his experience with Ag days BCGPA Director Ernest Wiebe's response was *"BC ag days was an excellent experience, this being my first time going, it was informative to meet with the other producer groups and to have a common cause in bringing up issues that affect all aspects of the agriculture community in BC. In particular talking about the water reserve and cost of production. There seemed to be a listening ear with the various ministers in their respective portfolios and a general agreement that BC's food security is on the top of everyone's mind. Finding solutions was clearly in the best interest of everyone that attended."*

We would like to thank the staff at BCAC for the great effort it takes to organize these meetings and ensuring that this group of 60 farmers and ranchers were prepared in advance for these meetings but also for the hospitality shown in our BC capital. Although this past growing season has been extremely challenging given increased cost of all inputs, drought and wild fire the overall feel was overwhelmingly optimistic about the future of agriculture but farmers and ranchers cautioned that continued investment from government will be required to continue to build resiliency within all sectors.



If you are interested in more information about these meetings or have questions about the BC AG Council, please call **Jennifer Critcher @ 250-219-3284**

"We had many productive conversations that were offered with possible avenues for solutions. I have heard your concerns and feedback, loud and clear, and we understand that there is more work to do" Pam Alexis, BC Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries.

