



Agricultural Advisory Council calls on the federal and provincial governments to support Canada's agriculture industry by ensuring reliable network operations

VANCOUVER, British Columbia, March 04, 2020 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- In the wake of illegal blockades that severely disrupted rail transportation in Canada, the Agriculture Advisory Council to CN is calling on the federal and provincial governments, and supply chain partners, to support Canada's agriculture industry by demonstrating leadership that ensures reliable network operations in the future.

Following a meeting in Vancouver to discuss the impacts of the blockades, the Council said Wednesday the rail disruptions took a heavy toll on the agriculture industry's ability to serve domestic and international customers and had significant negative financial impacts on farming families across Western Canada.

"We acknowledge that CN's recovery efforts are underway, but we emphasize that there is still a complex backlog that cannot be underestimated. This is critical as there are customers still waiting for their product, farmers waiting to be paid and inputs like fertilizer that must be delivered in time for seeding," says Alanna Koch, farmer and CN Agricultural Advisory Council Chair.

CN established the Agricultural Advisory Council in August 2019 to further enhance CN's culture of stakeholder engagement and to formalize ongoing consultations with diverse members of the agricultural industry. The Council, a first for a Canadian railway, is one of the main consultative bodies to provide CN with advice on its annual Grain Plan and feedback on the CN Winter Plan. It also serves as a forum to discuss policy issues that impact the agricultural industry, including the international trade situation, regulatory barriers and other emerging issues.

The Council met with CN officials in advance of the Canadian Crops Convention in Vancouver to discuss the severe impacts of the illegal blockades and how similar situations can be avoided in the future.

The blockades are the most recent event during a challenging season that saw disrupted transportation, volatile trade and difficult growing conditions.

The Council noted that the blockades put Canada's economy at risk and have damaged our reputation as a reliable supplier. The Council said it is vital to ensure the future security of the railway network to restore Canada's international reputation as a reliable and efficient supplier to world markets.

"We know CN is focused on getting past this event and we look forward to providing input into its plan on how it will work with their stakeholders, customers, and the federal and provincial governments to ensure reliability and restore service for the Canadian agriculture industry," Koch says. "To reduce the vulnerabilities Canadian farmers face because of unexpected disruptions to the supply chain, we call on the federal and provincial governments to work with CN and farmers on executing this plan to ensure our reliability and restore Canada's reputation as a world-class trading partner."

This plan will require investment by governments and the railway industry into critical infrastructure at Canada's ports.

Contact:

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Chair, CN Agricultural Advisory Council
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About the CN Agricultural Advisory Council

The Council is composed of 10 representatives from the agricultural sector as well as CN representatives that meet quarterly.

Saskatchewan Members:

- | Alanna Koch, Edenwold, Farmer, Consultant, Former Saskatchewan Agriculture Deputy Minister (Chair, CN Agricultural Advisory Committee)
- | Cheryl Jolly-Nagel, Mossbank, Farmer, Director, Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association, Public Speaker on Ag Advocacy
- | Todd Lewis, Gray, Farmer President, Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan
- | Jim Wickett, Rosetown, Farmer, Chair, Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association

Manitoba Members:

- | Fred Greig, Reston, Farmer, Chair, Manitoba Wheat and Barley Growers Association, Former Director, Manitoba Pulse Growers Association
- | Paul Orsak, Binscarth, Farmer, Former Director, Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association

Alberta Members:

- | Dave Bishop, Barons, Farmer, Chair, Alberta Barley Commission, Regional Representative, Alberta Wheat Commission
- | Jeff Nielsen, Olds, Farmer, Chair, Grain Growers of Canada, Director, Alberta Barley Commission
- | Bernie Schoorlemmer, Rycroft, Farmer, Former Director, Alberta Pulse Growers

British Columbia Member:

- | Barry Follensbee, Rolla, Farmer, Director, BC Grain Producers Association. Former Director, Canadian Canola Growers Association

Council Advisors:

- | Dale Eisler, Senior Policy Fellow, Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, University of Regina
- | Kim McConnell, Founder, AdFarm