



Ms. Mia Norrie, Chair, WCB Review Panel
Alberta Labour
11th Floor Commerce Place
10155-102 Street
Edmonton, AB T5J 4L4

July 14, 2016

Dear Ms. Norrie,

The Alberta Wheat Commission (AWC) is a producer-led organization that represents the interests of over 14,000 wheat farmers in Alberta. We are pleased to have the opportunity to participate in the Workers Compensation Board (WCB) Review that you are leading with Mr. Carpenter and Ms. Cunliffe.

With the introduction of Bill 6, the *Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act*, mandatory WCB insurance coverage for all paid farm and ranch workers came into effect on January 1, 2016. This change has positioned the agriculture industry as a key stakeholder in this review.

AWC is a founding member of the Alberta Agriculture Farm and Ranch Safety Coalition (AgCoalition) formed by 29 producer groups from across the crop and livestock sector who came together based on a common industry goal to develop a unified approach to farm safety in response to Bill 6. Through this forum, farmers, ranchers and their employees have expressed a keen interest in continuing to foster a culture of farm and ranch safety in our province. We believe that education and training geared toward the unique nature of farming and ranching operations will play an integral role in this work. To that end, we would like to recommend that the WCB acknowledge the need for a farm and ranch specific safety program, similar to the *FarmSafe Alberta* program, and extend a discount on WCB premiums to farm and ranch owners that who have completed a sector-specific safety program. Currently, WCB offers premium rebates to employers that who have completed their "Certificate of Recognition (COR)." Many consider the COR program to be time consuming and expensive. Some sectors can pass the cost of completing and maintaining a COR on to their customers. Farmers and ranchers, however, are price takers and therefore must shoulder these expenses. In addition to compliance-related costs, the program does not acknowledge many of the unique features of a farm or ranch operation. We believe that WCB discounts would not only offer safer operations a well-deserved cost-saving mechanism, it would incent more producers



to participate in the related education and will align with the industry's work to continue to develop a farm and ranch safety culture.

As revealed in the Government of Alberta's recently published *Public Sector Body Compensation Disclosure*, Guy Kerr, WCB's President and CEO, earns an annual salary of \$896,205 – an increase of more than 40 per cent over the past five years and twice the salary of his counterpart in Ontario. In light of this information, AWC is also recommending that a full costing review be conducted at every level of the organization to determine its efficiency. Further to this review, one of the most effective and least expensive ways to create efficient and competitive organizations is to allow for competition in the marketplace. AWC encourages the review panel to consider the benefits associated with allowing business owners to choose who will provide their insurance coverage, be it WCB or an equivalent private insurance alternative. Until WCB became mandatory on January 1, 2016, many farm and ranch owners relied on private companies to meet their insurance needs. Offering employers a choice ensures they have access to the most comprehensive programs at competitive rates, tailored to suit the needs of their individual businesses.

AWC is pleased to have the opportunity to participate in this review process and invite you to contact us should you have any questions about the recommendations that we have outlined in our submission.

Sincerely,



Kevin Auch, Chairman
Alberta Wheat Commission

