

# WHEAT REPORT



## CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



**Kent Erickson**  
**Chairman**

It may seem like there are more producer events and meetings than you can possibly get out to over any given winter, but of course there's a lot of potential value in attending as many as you can.

Since time is always of the essence, there are two meetings that I would recommend setting aside time for in early 2015: FarmTech and Alberta Wheat Commission's (AWC) annual general meeting (AGM). Both are happening this month at Edmonton Expo Centre at Northlands. FarmTech dates are Jan. 27–29, and our AGM is taking place on Wed., Jan. 28.

In the off season, events like FarmTech give you the opportunity to meet with your peers to discuss the most important issues in our industry, take in reputable speakers and learn something new. Not to mention FarmTech has a social environment that I look forward to every year—it's a bit like the Super Bowl of grower conferences.

As one of the host groups, AWC has a big stake in the success of FarmTech, and this year's speaker lineup reflects that with a lot of valuable speaker sessions tailored to wheat producers. Growers can look forward to hearing from organizations like Cereals Canada and the Canadian International Grains Institute (Cigi), as well as sessions on topics such as marketing strategies, wheat quality, soil fertility and more.

And, of course, this year you can look forward to a keynote speech from news anchor Peter Mansbridge

and an evening of improv with Canadian funnyman Colin Mochrie. But amidst all the excitement, don't forget to visit us at the AWC booth.

Our AGM is the other event to mark on your calendar. Since it coincides with FarmTech, you won't have to travel farther than down the hall to make it to both.

The AGM is a great opportunity to come out and meet with our staff and directors. We look forward to telling you more about the initiatives we have led and collaborated on this year, and letting you know how we've put your check-off dollars to work. But in true forum style, this is also a great opportunity to participate in the direction of our organization—we'd love to hear from you about what you would like to see from AWC in the future and get your feedback about what we've been doing to date.

As you make plans for the 2015 growing season, why not come out to these events and get involved with your industry? See you there!

## GENERAL MANAGER'S MESSAGE



**Tom Steve**  
**General  
Manager**

**A** producer says to a railroad employee, "What's the point of publishing a train schedule when trains run late more often than not?" The railroad employee replies, "If schedules didn't exist, how would we know exactly how late the trains are?"

While rail service is a joke to some, it lost the comic factor long ago for western Canadian farmers.

Transport Minister Lisa Raitt has initiated a complete examination of the Canadian transportation system with the Canadian Transportation Agency (CTA) review, mandated to develop long-term solutions to meet global demand for Canadian cargo. The review panel promises an emphasis on agriculture, which is extremely positive from the Alberta Wheat Commission's (AWC) viewpoint.

Representatives of AWC were among the first to meet with members of the CTA review panel. Our message was clear, and guided by growers. We believe the best way to improve rail service in Canada is to hold the railways accountable for their service. With the current legislation, this is difficult. AWC supports reciprocal penalties, wherein holding the railways financially accountable for poor performance would result in better execution of their business. AWC, in collaboration with other commodity groups, industry and government, is

investing grower dollars to generate data on more than 90 per cent of the rail grain volume in Western Canada. The plan is for this data to be used in the creation of service level agreements, which will ultimately allow for standardized terms of service—the basis for penalties to railways.

We need a system of commercial accountability for all parties with clear definitions of service. A transportation system that meets global demand for all Canadian cargo will enable our industry to grow.

We look forward to continuing to meet with the CTA panel throughout the review process, where we will reinforce our message. We believe the positive results of this work will result in rail service that helps promote growth.

## WHEAT WORLD

**GROWTH.  
INNOVATION.  
RESULTS.**

Follow the Alberta Wheat Commission on **Twitter** (@albertawheat) and **Facebook** (Alberta Wheat Commission)



## AWC AGM AT FarmTech 2015™

Join the Alberta Wheat Commission for our Annual General Meeting during FarmTech 2015™

Meet with AWC Directors, Regional Representatives and staff to learn more about how we're putting your check-off dollars to work.

**Wednesday, January 28th, 2015**  
**Edmonton Expo Centre at Northlands**  
**Hall E**

**11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.**

For more information and an AGM agenda, visit [albertawheat.com](http://albertawheat.com)

## SPOTLIGHT ON RESEARCH

### *The importance of being early*



**Lauren Comin**  
**Research  
Manager**  
*(currently on  
maternity leave)*

Every year, producers gamble with the weather. While an open fall is ideal, in Alberta the weather can be unpredictable as early as the first week of September. A cold spring can prevent producers from getting seed in the ground early enough to allow for enough frost- and snow-free growing days. Dean Spaner, a wheat breeder at the University of Alberta, makes early maturity a priority for his program, which targets the parkland. As Spaner explains, if the cold is your biggest battle, earlier varieties may be something you should consider.

**Alberta Wheat Commission:** Why is “earliness” important in your breeding program, in the context of its location?

**Dean Spaner:** A great deal of bread wheat grown in the northern regions of the Prairies is downgraded because of frost damage before maturity. Most regions north of Calgary have quite a small window between the last frost of the spring and the first frost of the fall. Because we are the most northern wheat-breeding program in Canada, early maturity is one of our most important breeding objectives.



Dean Spaner, professor and wheat breeder at the University of Alberta.

Photo: Anne Pratt

**AWC:** What components go into earliness and what makes a variety earlier than others?

**DS:** Other than environmental factors, drought and temperature, three genetically controlled mechanisms regulate the timing of wheat growth and development. These mechanisms include vernalization genes, photoperiod response genes and earliness genes. For the last 10 years or more, my graduate students and I have been trying to understand how these genes work and how to manipulate them to create varieties that are early and have high yield with high protein.

**AWC:** Are there any trade-offs to achieving earlier varieties?

**DS:** In general, higher-yielding wheat is later to mature and has less protein content. Breaking this triangular link—developing cultivars that are early maturing and high yielding, with elevated protein—is the challenge of plant breeding. An example of this linkage is Soft White Spring wheat. It is the highest-yielding class, but

matures about three to six days later with between three and five per cent less protein than Canadian Western Red Spring.

**AWC:** What do you have coming down the pipeline that producers should watch out for?

**DS:** PT769 was registered in 2014 and appears to be one of the earliest-maturing lines in Western Canada, with yield higher than the checks in the Parkland Co-operative test (Katepwa, Splendor, CDC Teal and CDC Osler). Mastin Seeds of Sundre has purchased the rights to this cultivar. Lines developed from our program are generally early, as this is one of the biggest selection pressures we have in our growing region and one of our main breeding objectives.

*The Alberta Wheat Commission supports Dean Spaner’s programs in Canadian Prairie Spring and General Purpose, as well as Hard Red Spring wheat. For more information on these programs and others, please visit [www.albertawheat.com/research](http://www.albertawheat.com/research)*

## SPOTLIGHT ON POLICY



**Erin K. Gowriluk**  
**Government  
Relations  
and Policy  
Manager**

**E**arly in 2014, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC) initiated a stakeholder consultation on the issue of crop variety registration in Canada, proposing alternatives to the current system. The majority of producer organizations indicated a preference for either the status quo or adding some flexibility to the current system through alternative options. As a result, Assistant Deputy Minister Greg Meredith and his colleagues from AAFC and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's (CFIA) Variety Registration Office held a meeting in Winnipeg, MB on Oct. 2, 2014, to outline the government's proposed changes.

The current registration system classifies crops in three parts. Part I includes major crops such as wheat, barley and canola, and these are subject to merit assessment by a

crop-specific Recommending Committee as well as two to three years of pre-registration or co-op trials. Safflower is the only crop currently included in Part II, which limits requirements to pre-registration trials. Part III crops, which include potato, sunflower, oilseed soybeans and forages, require only basic variety information in order to verify claims.

The new model proposes changing Part I to *Enhanced Registration* and Part III to *Basic Registration*—Part II would be eliminated. This would allow for the movement of crop kinds from enhanced to basic registration, and vice versa, and several stakeholders at the meeting—including Alberta Barley and the Alberta Wheat Commission—expressed interest in the potential to move classes within a specific crop.

The CFIA's Variety Registration Office would facilitate the movement of crop kinds (classes), but as part of that process, crop value chains would be required to demonstrate value chain consensus as well as a clear benefit to producers.

Stakeholders had until the end of last November to provide feedback on the proposed changes. Varieties recommended for registration under the modernized variety registration system could be ready as early as the 2016 planting season.

## MEET THE AWC STAFF



**Hannah Korschuh**  
**Interim Research Manager**

**H**annah Korschuh joined the Alberta Wheat Commission (AWC) as research manager this past November. Raised on a grain farm near Cluny, her passion for agriculture led her to the University of Saskatchewan where she obtained a B.Sc. in agriculture and a M.Sc. in soil science.

Korschuh draws on her experience in agricultural research from both the public and private sector. Along with her research experience, Hannah also taught an undergraduate soil science course for a number of years.

Korschuh says her favourite season is harvest. She has been known to use her holidays for long days spent on the combine—though like most, she found the 2014 harvest to be particularly difficult. She is excited to be the newest addition to the AWC team, allowing her to return home to Alberta and to officially re-join her family farming operation in Cluny.

In her spare time, Korschuh enjoys hiking, snowshoeing and outdoor adventures with her dogs. A former college volleyball player, Korschuh has since retired from the hardcourts due to knee surgeries.

