



NEWS RELEASE

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WSGA Response to Bill 6 Consultation Working Group Announcement

The Friday before the long weekend, the Alberta Government released the names of people who will be populating the consultation groups for the development of rules and regulations around Bill 6, *Enhanced Protection for Farm and Ranch Workers Act*.

This announcement has been delayed for months without explanation, leaving many of Alberta's farmers and ranchers wondering as they go through the busy spring season. "Perhaps the government felt the more time they put between the charged environment surrounding the introduction of the bill with the protests and demonstrations, the more accepting the agriculture industry will be to the names on the list," says WSGA president Aaron Brower.

The delay coupled with the lack of proper communication has only served to cloud the issue. "Many producers are unclear what will be discussed and decided in the working groups. Most of the missteps taken by the government in rolling out this bill were blamed on communication and it seems that problem has not been solved," says Brower.

"And there is still concern that the working groups are just an empty gesture. The government will go ahead and make whatever rules and regulations they see fit regardless of the recommendations that come out of the working groups. The statements and actions from the government certainly don't put our concerns to rest, if anything, it's the opposite."

In response to Bill 6, the AgCoalition was formed. The AgCoalition is producer-driven with 29 member organizations that represent 97 percent of the agriculture industry. "In subsequent meetings with ministers and government officials, the AgCoalition felt a positive working relationship had been established and the government had realized the tremendous resource they had in connecting with the agriculture industry through the AgCoalition," says Brower.

"The announcement of who will be sitting at the consultation table brought disappointment all around," says Brower. "These regs are going to impact primary producers, owner operators and employees most of all and they are greatly under represented at the working groups. This under representation has us worried that the outcome will be rules and regulations that aren't common sense and won't achieve the objective of safer farms and ranches."

The AgCoalition's representation of over 97% Alberta's ag sector will represent only 29% of the government working groups. "It's another example of the government disrespecting the opinion and wisdom of the industry," says Brower. "It's like they are saying 'Your generations of experience and knowledge from being on the farm are not as valuable as these non-agricultural experts we have chosen to represent you.' It's a slap in the face."

"If we were looking for outside expertise in health and safety, safety experts from the construction industry or the oil and gas industry would better understand the issues in agriculture more than the experts they have chosen."