

September 24, 2014

Ms. Kate Malloy
Editor, The Hill Times
69 Sparks Street
Ottawa, ON K1P 5A5
email: kmalloy@hilltimes.com

Agricultural Growth Act

Dear Ms. Malloy:

Partners in Innovation brings together 20 provincial, regional and national organizations representing the vast majority of farmers and most of the crops produced across Canada. Our coalition represents producers of grains, oilseeds, pulse crops, fruits, vegetables, potatoes and ornamental crops in all regions of Canada. It also includes value chain organizations: processors, input suppliers, marketers and exporters. The farmer organizations, value chain groups and industry groups that participate in Partners in Innovation are united in support of amendments to Canada's Plant Breeders' Rights (PBR) legislation as contained in Bill C-18: the Agricultural Growth Act.

In addition to demonstrating to policy makers across Canada that the large majority of farmers and other agricultural sector participants support amended Plant Breeders' Rights legislation, it is also a goal of Partners in Innovation to ensure that factual information about the amendments is presented to farmers and decision makers in Canada. Unfortunately, myths and misinformation perpetuated by a small minority of interest groups continue to be presented in the media and other public forums. This is unfortunately the case in the article about Bill C-18 that appeared in the September 22 issue of the Hill Times. Given that your paper is read by policy makers who will influence the fate of PBR amendments in Parliament, we believe it is imperative to correct the false statements made in the article.

1. The amendments to PBR contained in Bill C-18 do not restrict the ability for farmers to save the grain that they produce to use as seed on their own farms. In fact, the bill proposes to entrench a farmers' exception to the Plant Breeder's Rights. Current legislation does not contain that provision.
2. Opponents of amendments to PBR have gone to great lengths to raise concerns around the term "Farmers' Privilege". This term is only found in a marginal note as a point of reference in the legislation. It is not part of the legislation itself. What is important is that the farmers' ability to save, condition, and replant seed of a PBR protected variety is clearly entrenched in the legislation.
3. The amendments proposed in Bill C-18 do not establish "end point royalties" or give breeders the ability to collect royalties anywhere but on the propagating material (seed). It does, however give breeders the ability to seek compensation in many different ways if they can demonstrate that the seed was acquired illegally.
4. Amendments to Plant Breeders' Rights will not just benefit large corporations. In fact 50% of rights granted have been granted to public institutions, such as Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, and University breeding programs. The bottom line is this legislation will lead to more investment in Canada, from companies big and small.



Canada's current PBR legislation is outdated and is having a negative impact on Canadian agriculture. Over the past 20 years, companies have chosen not to invest in plant breeding in Canada, and international plant breeders have chosen not to provide their varieties to Canada because our legislation does not conform to the most recent international convention. This means Canadian farmers have been denied access to superior varieties that would increase their profits.

Just the decision of the federal government to introduce legislation to amend Plant Breeders' Rights legislation has already had positive results. Recently, sod was turned on a new research and breeding centre in Saskatoon and announcements were made of partnerships between Canadian seed companies and international breeding companies to bring new and improved varieties to Canadian farmers. All of these decisions were predicated on updated Plant Breeders' Rights legislation and the resulting benefits are all at risk should the amendments not be implemented.

Partners in Innovation: the coalition representing the majority of farmers in Canada, and most of the agricultural crop value chain, sincerely hopes that you will print this letter to ensure that our decision makers understand the proposed amendments to Plant Breeders' Rights legislation and the real need for them to be implemented to benefit Canadian farmers, and the entire agricultural sector.

Sincerely,

Partners in Innovation



www.partnersininnovation.ca @CdnAgInnovation