

National Office
2717 Wentz Ave.
Saskatoon, Sask., S7K 4B6
Tel (306) 652-9465
Fax (306) 664-6226



national farmers union
In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CHAMBER OF COMMERCE RESOLUTION ON CWB SHAMEFUL

ABBEY, Sask.—“The Canadian Chamber of Commerce has no business working to weaken or undermine farmers’ collective marketing agencies, especially as the vast majority of farmers have repeatedly demonstrated their support for the CWB,” said Harold Blodgett, President of NFU Local 636 in Saskatchewan.

Blodgett was commenting on Tuesday’s resolution by Canadian Chamber of Commerce delegates to recommend “...that the federal government implement the Federal Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food’s June 2002 recommendation” that “the Canadian Wheat Board authorize, on a trial basis, a free market for the sale of wheat and barley...”

Blodgett criticized the Chamber for not taking the time to understand the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) or even to understand the trade agreements that the Chamber has supported. “You can’t have an open market on a ‘trial basis.’ NAFTA Chapter 11 is very clear: If you turn over wheat and barley marketing to transnational grain companies, you can’t reverse that decision unless you pay billions in compensation to those companies. Thanks to trade policies endorsed by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, the open market option is not a path we can go down and look around; it is more like a cliff that we can jump off. Canada either has a farmer-controlled marketing system or one controlled by Cargill, ConAgra, and Archer Daniels Midland, and there is no going back,” said Blodgett.

Blodgett also condemned the Chamber for ignoring the clear democratic wishes of farmers. “Farmers want a strong and effective Canadian Wheat Board selling for them in the world market. Farmers have democratically proven this time and time again: in numerous elections to the CWB Advisory Committee, in the ‘Barley Vote’, and in three rounds of CWB Directors’ elections. Farmers have democratically chosen CWB marketing and we don’t appreciate business-owners working to take the CWB away from us,” said Blodgett.

Blodgett concluded: “All independent evidence conclusively demonstrates that the CWB increases farmers’ prices and incomes. Perhaps the membership of the Canada’s Chambers of Commerce includes grain companies or grain processors that would benefit if the CWB were destroyed and grain prices reduced.”

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For More Information:

Harold Blodgett, President, NFU Local 636: (306) 689-2602
Darrin Qualman, NFU Executive Secretary: (306) 652-9465