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national farmers union
In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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RECOMMENDATION 14 SHOULD BE TOSSED INTO FILE 13

SASKATOON, Sask.— “The recommendation that the CWB should ‘authorize, on a trial basis, a free market for the sale of wheat and barley’ is nonsensical,” said NFU President Stewart Wells. Wells was commenting on Recommendation 14 from a recent report, “The Future Role of Government in Agriculture,” issued by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture.

“You can’t have an open market on a ‘trial basis’,” said Wells. He continued: “NAFTA Chapter 11 is very clear. If you turn over wheat and barley marketing, and the profits that go with it, to transnational grain companies, you can’t reverse that decision unless you pay hundreds-of-millions of dollars in compensation to those companies for lost future profits. 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. It is either the CWB or it is Cargill, ConAgra, and Archer Daniels Midland, and there is no going back.”

NFU Women’s President Shannon Storey noted that all the evidence shows that the CWB *increases* prices paid to farmers: the recent CWB Benchmarking study, the Auditor General’s report, the Kraft-Furtan-Tyrchniewicz study on wheat marketing, and the Schmitz-Gray-Storey study on barley marketing. “Every credible, independent study demonstrates that the CWB increases farmers’ incomes. Furthermore, the vast majority of farmers consistently vote for a strong, effective CWB with its single-desk selling power. Why does the Committee want the CWB to act against the will of the vast majority of prairie farmers and the elected farmer directors?” asked Storey.

Storey also questioned the Committee’s implicit assumption that the CWB impedes value-added processing. “Over the past ten years, wheat and durum processing in Canada has grown at twice the U.S. rate. Anti-CWB forces have practiced a disinformation campaign of logically-inconsistent arguments such as: the CWB sells for low prices; and the CWB discourages value-added processing. The data shows that none of these arguments are true, but the facts don’t stand in the way of those intent on taking the \$265 million annual CWB premium away from farmers and giving it to the grain trade. The Committee should consider reality and revise its recommendations accordingly,” said Storey.

Wells concluded: “The Committee’s Recommendation 14 is based on ideology and wishful thinking. The idea that you can improve the situation for farmers by reducing their market power is illogical and nonsensical. Many of members of that Committee have been targets of a deliberate disinformation campaign against the CWB. Farmers need to stay focused on the \$265 million dollar marketing advantage offered by the CWB and work to expose the disinformation received by the MPs.

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