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national farmers union
In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MITCHELL'S APPOINTMENT AS AG MINISTER OFFERS FRESH START: NFU

SWIFT CURRENT, Sask. – The National Farmers Union (NFU) believes Andrew Mitchell's appointment as Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food offers a fresh opportunity to implement policies that alleviate the farm income crisis.

"It's essential that the new minister of agriculture focus on raising the net incomes of family farmers across the country," said NFU President Stewart Wells. "There are a number of very pressing issues that need to be dealt with immediately. The livestock sector is facing serious problems, orderly marketing systems are under attack at the World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations, and net farm income is at its lowest level since the Great Depression. These issues must be tackled right away."

While Prime Minister Martin has indicated Parliament will be recalled October 4, Wells said action on the agriculture front cannot wait till then.

Wells added that the appointment of Wayne Easter to the post of Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food is a positive move. Easter's extensive experience and wide knowledge of farm issues across the country should help Mitchell hit the ground running, he said.

Wells said while he was disappointed Tony Valeri was removed from the Transport portfolio, he believes it should not make any difference to the federal government's commitment to transfer ownership of 13,000 grain hopper cars to the Farmer Rail Car Coalition. "Tony Valeri had a good working relationship with the Coalition, and we are hopeful the new minister, Jean Lapierre, will also be committed to helping western farmers own a major asset in the rail transportation system."

The NFU President said he was pleased to see Reg Alcock reappointed Minister Responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board. "It's important to have a strong Minister who is committed to the principles of orderly marketing," he said. "Particularly when the Wheat Board is under constant attack from both the United States and the European Union at the WTO talks."

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