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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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IS FARMER CHECK-OFF MONEY BEING USED TO SUPPORT MONSANTO?

ROSSENDALE, MB: Fred Tait, past Vice-President of the National Farmers Union (NFU), expressed today in the strongest possible terms his deep disappointment with the news that the Canadian Canola Growers Association (CCGA) has made application to intervene to support Monsanto in its Supreme Court case against Saskatchewan grain farmer Percy Schmeiser.

Tait noted, "Does intervening on Monsanto's behalf mean money from Manitoba farmers is going to be used to further Monsanto's interests? The Manitoba Canola Growers Association (MCGA) President Bruce Delgrano and fellow board member Ed Schurer currently serve on the board of CCGA and have played an important role in the CCGA decision to support Monsanto's position during the upcoming Supreme Court case. How much of Manitoba farmers' money are they prepared to spend to help Monsanto?"

"Two crucial issues being brought before the Court involve a farmer's right to retain and use farmer-saved seed, and the ability of a corporation like Monsanto to punish any farmer who has had his seed supply contaminated by seed varieties owned by Monsanto. Check-off-funded commodity organizations should not be helping Monsanto crush farmers' rights," said Tait.

"A year ago I was surprised to read farm press reports that then MCGA President Ernie Sirsky had accepted a trip to Spain from Monsanto while the current President, Bruce Dalgrano, served on a Monsanto committee designed to enable the introduction of Roundup Ready Wheat. From the outside, it looks like Monsanto is just using these directors as quick access to Manitoba farmers' money," continued Manitoba NFU Coordinator Ken Sigurdson. "How many farmers today would agree to pay a check-off on canola to support the MCGA/CCGA if they thought that their contributions would be used to pay legal costs to support Monsanto? Farmers themselves can answer that question by electing different board members in the current MCGA elections," said Sigurdson.

NFU President Stewart Wells concluded, "A few years ago farmers caught the Western Canadian Wheat Growers always supporting the railways in court battles and policy questions over grain transportation, and the retribution was swift. Now we have a check-off-funded commodity organization working to promote the interests of biotech companies and against the basic interests of farmers. Sooner or later, farmers will have to put their own interests above Monsanto's, and it might as well be sooner."

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