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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **MISSING NFU MEMBERS SOUGHT**

**GANANOQUE, Ont.**—As a result of a flawed process administered by Agricorp, a significant number of farmers who intended to support the National Farmers Union had their cheques deposited to another farm organization, and have received membership cards from the wrong organization.

“Agricorp’s process completely ignores the payee on the cheque. Defying all logic, accounting and banking practices, Agricorp relied exclusively on the pre-selected check-off on the Farm Business Registration form to determine where to direct the farmer’s funds,” said Peter Dowling, NFU Co-ordinator. “It’s unacceptable!”

Under the Ontario *Farm Business Registration and Farm Organizations Funding Act*, farm families must designate a general farm organization that is to receive their cheques. Agricorp, a crown corporation operated on a cost recovery basis, administers the Farm Business Registration (FBR) Program under the *Act* for the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

The problem arose when OMAF reversed its decision to “de-populate” the selection boxes on the FBR forms; that is, the organization a farmer sent his or her cheque to last year was already pre-checked when the 2003 form arrived at Ontario farms. Farmers who wrote a cheque to the NFU, but did not change the organization checked off, became listed as supporters of that other organization because of Agricorp’s flawed process.

The NFU has located about 30 farm families who made out their cheques to NFU - Ontario, but whose fees were sent to another organization. The NFU has indications that there could be 90 to 100 more farm families in this situation. In written and verbal communications, the NFU has asked Agricorp to track down and correct all the errors.

“Agricorp seems unwilling to put any effort into locating the rest of the missing NFU members even though several Agricorp staff have accepted responsibility for the misdirected cheques and flawed processing,” said Dowling. A recent letter from the corporation down played the magnitude of the problem and stated, “we believe further action is not warranted.”

“Since 2003 is the first year that the NFU has participated in the FBR program as an accredited general farm organization, none of its members’ forms were pre-checked to NFU - Ontario,” said Dowling. “Any chance of avoiding these missing members was taken away when OMAF opted to support the OFA demand that farmers be pre-assigned to a GFO rather than opting for a fair and equitable approach that is consistent with the intent and practice of the *Act* and its Regulations.”

“Most of the missing members we have located so far were found by casual conversations within the NFU. We are concerned that people who want to participate in the farm union movement have been discouraged by a confusing registration system that lacks integrity,” concluded Dowling.

— 30 —

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