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national farmers union
In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MARCH 28, 2002

**VANCLIEF HIRES WORLD'S LARGEST PR FIRM
TO MANUFACTURE FARMER CONSENT**

SASKATOON, Sask.—“The federal government is making a mockery of the idea of consultation,” said NFU President Stewart Wells.

The NFU and other farm groups received notice on March 26 that “consultations” on a new “integrated Agricultural Policy Framework” would begin the next day. The consultations will run through to April 19.

“These so-called consultations will be half over before farmers know they started. The second half of the meetings will fall during the busy first weeks of seeding. This timeline is an insult to farmers. To expect farmers to buy airline tickets and fly on a few days notice is ridiculous. They’re making it impossible for farmers to attend,” said Wells.

Further, Minister Vanclief has hired GPC International to facilitate the meetings. GPC is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Fleishman-Hillard, the world’s largest public relations firm. Fleishman-Hillard’s clients include: AstraZeneca, Caterpillar, ConAgra, Kellogg’s, Monsanto, Nestle, and Wal-Mart.

“The combination of the impossible timeline and the heavyweight PR firm will act like a bulldozer in a china shop. The process is clearly not designed to uncover farmer opinion, but rather to manufacture a superficial consensus to justify decisions already made in Ottawa. The Minister is using a fast-track approach and big PR to manufacture consent in farm country,” said Wells.

Government presentations will focus on how to integrate “food safety and quality, environment, science and innovation, renewal, and business risk management.” Wells commented: “The federal government’s plan seems to be: undermine stability on family farms, push genetically-modified foods onto reluctant consumers, bend environmental laws to make way for corporate hog mega-barns, dismantle regulatory agencies, and protect the profits of the world’s dominant agri-businesses. If this is the plan, I think Minister Vanclief picked the right PR firm to package it for Canadians.”

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Backgrounder to the NFU's March 28, 2002 news release

On its website, Fleishman-Hillard describes an early campaign for its long-time client Monsanto. Fleishman-Hillard notes there that Monsanto's "major commercial commitment to genetic engineering is being threatened by public ignorance and fear...." Fleishman-Hillard goes on to characterize opposition to Monsanto and its products as "factually-unwarranted, emotion-laden controversy."

In its ongoing work for Monsanto, Fleishman-Hillard's has as one of its objectives "to build awareness, appreciation, and support for biotechnology/genetic engineering...." See www.fleishman.com/overview/reputation/silver_anvil/mon_genetic.html

Fleishman-Hillard has over 2000 employees on several continents. Its 2000 revenues were \$342 million [U.S.], up 61% from the year before. Fleishman-Hillard is, in turn, owned by Omnicom Group which had 2001 revenues of \$6.9 billion [U.S.] and profits of \$503 million [U.S.].

In January of this year, former U.S. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor joined Fleishman-Hillard's international advisory board. Also on the advisory board is Bill Clinton's former Defense Secretary William Cohen, and former Republican Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich.