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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**NFU-ONTARIO PRESENTS 50 YEARS OF ACTIVISM
TO ACCREDITATION TRIBUNAL**

GUELPH, Ont.—"Our organization has engaged on many issues and fought many battles on behalf of Ontario's farmers," said Ellard Powers, a Board member of the National Farmers Union-Ontario who farms in Renfrew County. "Some we have won, and some we have lost, but in every case, the effort was worthwhile."

Powers, who was a Vice-President of the Ontario Farmers Union in the 1960s and Chair of the Canadian Dairy Commission from 1973 to '77, was the first speaker on a panel of NFU-Ontario officials appearing before a five-member Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food Appeal Tribunal earlier this month. The hearing was held to consider the Union's application for accreditation as a General Farm Organization under the Farm Registration and Farm Organizations Funding Act.

John Langlois, a farmer and NFU member who also has a law practice in Stratford, acted as legal counsel for the Union. Both Langlois and Powers were NFU negotiators in the talks that led up to the introduction of the legislation in 1993. They pointed to the National Farmers Union-Ontario's "long and impressive record of representing Ontario's family farmers locally, provincially and nationally," from its birth as the Ontario Farmers Union in 1952, through its founding role in the National Farmers Union in 1969, and its recent provincial incorporation.

The other NFU-Ontario board members making the presentation were NFU Coordinator Peter Dowling, a dairy farmer from Frontenac County; Don Mills, a National Board Member who farms in Middlesex County; and Colleen Ross Weatherhead, a livestock and organic cash crop farmer in Dundas County. Also on the panel were NFU Organizer, Bruce Dodds and Regional Secretary, Helen Forsey.

The panel members addressed each of the eligibility criteria under the Act, showing how NFU-Ontario meets every one of those requirements. The presentation covered everything from membership numbers to local affiliates, from By-laws to finances, from internal democratic structures to educational and advocacy activities.

One of the three thick binders of supporting documentation was entirely made up of briefs and submissions made to federal and provincial government bodies by the NFU in the past two and a half years. It demonstrated how thoroughly the NFU has met the legislated requirement that the applicant organization "provide advice and analysis to governments ... concerning agricultural issues." Another contained membership lists and the minutes of the most recent annual meetings for the fourteen NFU Locals across the province.

NFU-Ontario has more than doubled its membership since the end of January, and is actively involved in a number of projects at the local and provincial levels.

"The specific markets and methods of farming have changed dramatically over the five decades since our organization's beginning," Powers told the Tribunal. "What has not changed is the need for effective, voluntary and democratic farm organizations with a vision for a vibrant and sustainable agriculture based in the family farm. The National Farmers Union-Ontario is such an organization, and we ask you to grant our application for accreditation."

The Tribunal is expected to make a decision in the coming weeks.

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