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national farmers union
In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MAY 4, 2010

**NFU APPEARS BEFORE COMMONS AG. COMMITTEE EXAMINING
“YOUNG FARMERS AND THE FUTURE OF FARMING”**

WIARTON, Ont.—The House of Commons Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food was in Wiarton, Ontario today as part of a series of cross-Canada meetings in rural communities. The Committee is holding hearings, looking at the barriers that young farmers and new farmers face in entering the sector, and looking at how government policies can stop the rapid loss of young farmers in Canada.

NFU Ontario Coordinator and Desboro-area farmer Sean McGivern made a presentation to Committee members today. He told the Committee that in order to support young and new farmers, Canada needs a new approach to farm support and business risk management program design. McGivern said that if we want to have funds to support more farmers, then we must stop paying out the bulk of our farm support dollars to the biggest players.

“I don’t believe that we should be paying farmers in terms of pounds or bushels or revenues, but instead, our programs should pay the farmers who provide enhanced environmental stewardship, who add to rural infrastructure, who create rural employment, and who take other steps that create a vibrant rural economy,” said McGivern. Currently, Canada caps farm support programs at \$3 million per farm per year. McGivern and other presenters at today’s hearings questioned the wisdom of multi-million-dollar caps.

McGivern also linked agriculture policy to the health of Canadians, and he called on Committee members and the government to adopt a longer planning horizon. “We need a very long term-plan, a 50-year plan, with 5-year plateaus and reassessments along the way. A long-term plan could help enhance citizens’ health, and would force us to take very seriously the supply of new farmers coming up through the ranks,” said McGivern.

The NFU was one of the first organizations to raise alarms about the rapid decline in the number of young farmers. According to Statistics Canada’s Census of Agriculture, the number of farmers in Canada under the age of 35 fell by 62% between 1991 and 2006.

The NFU believes that the Standing Committee’s decision to travel to rural communities is very positive—a step toward understanding rural issues and the farm income crisis. The

NFU was disappointed, however, that the Committee hearing process left many, many passionate young farmers unable to make a presentation. Many young farmers put their names forward in the hope of sharing their views and experiences with Committee MPs. The Committee, however, citing time constraints, chose not to invite many of those young farmers to make a presentation. The NFU will follow up with the Committee Chair in the hope of dramatically improving this aspect of the process in the future. In the interim, the NFU strongly urges young farmers, and all Canadians, to submit written comments to the Committee. The address is:

Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food
Sixth Floor, 131 Queen Street
House of Commons
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6
Canada
Facsimile: 613-995-2106
Email: AGRI@parl.gc.ca

The NFU is at the forefront in terms of building youth leadership and advancing the interests of young and new farmers in Canada. The NFU has a Youth President position as part of its Board of Directors and Executive, and the organization has a strong youth program, including its recently-announced "Campaign for New Farmers."

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For more information, please contact:

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