

National Office  
2717 Wentz Ave.  
Saskatoon, Sask.  
S7K 4B6  
Tel (306) 652-9465  
Fax (306) 664-6226  
E-Mail: nfu@nfu.ca



**national farmers union**  
*In Union Is Strength*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **NFU REPRESENTATIVES PARTICIPATE IN OTTAWA LOBBY EFFORT**

Two representatives of the National Farmers Union (NFU) are in Ottawa as part of a lobby delegation urging the federal government to provide emergency funding for financially-hard pressed Saskatchewan farmers.

NFU Vice-President Terry Boehm of Allan and NFU Saskatchewan Coordinator Don Kelsey of Choiceland are part of the Saskatchewan delegation which met with Federal Agriculture Minister Chuck Strahl and members of the Conservative caucus; Ralph Goodale, Wayne Easter and the Liberal Caucus; and the federal NDP caucus.

The lobby effort was organized by Mark Wartman, Saskatchewan Minister of Agriculture and Food, and includes representatives of the NFU, Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM), the provincial Farm Support Review Committee, Saskatchewan Canola Growers, and the Porcupine Plain Disaster Assistance Committee. The delegation is seeking \$575 million in emergency financial aid for the province's farmers.

To arrive at the \$575 million figure, analysts in the Saskatchewan Department of Agriculture calculated farmers' average annual input costs over the past five years, and then projected the increase in input costs for the coming year. The \$575 million would compensate farmers for their projected cost-of-production increases this year. In the long-term, the NFU advocates structural and policy changes to allow farmers to earn better returns from the marketplace, and a safety-net program based on cost-of-production.

Terry Boehm said the lobby effort was worthwhile. "While there were no definite commitments, the government did not give a definitive 'no' either," he stated. "Minister Strahl indicated the information we provided will help him when the Cabinet begins its Budget discussions."

Boehm said Saskatchewan farmers are confronted with a projected drop in net farm income this year, and many are already "extremely desperate."

"Many farmers don't have credit resources or cash to put in a crop this spring," said Boehm. "Given the policy direction of governments over the past 25 years, this hasn't come as a surprise. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been drained out of the provincial economy over the years. The loss of the Crow rate, the abandonment of rail

branchlines, and the loss of the two-price wheat system have all contributed to a predictable result – lower farm incomes.”

He added that the NFU is also making a strong case for maintaining the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB). “The CWB currently contributes an extra \$600 million per year into farmers’ pockets. We need to make sure we hold on to that income.”

Boehm concluded that agricultural and trade policies should be measured – and judged - by their impact on farmers’ net incomes. “Everything governments have done to this point has been to benefit agribusiness suppliers, processors and exporters,” he said. “Corporate profits are at record highs, while farmers’ incomes are at record lows. Farmers have adapted to new technology and become more efficient, but the wealth they create is captured by the corporate sector. We cannot continue down this path. Farmers need more economic power in the marketplace.”

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Contact: Terry Boehm, NFU Vice-President (306) 255-2880 or (306) 862-6932  
Don Kelsey, NFU Sask. Coordinator (306) 428-2258 or (306) 862-6932  
Stewart Wells, NFU President (306) 773-6852 or (306) 741-7694  
Terry Pugh, NFU Executive-Secretary (306) 652-9465