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national farmers union
In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CWB ELECTIONS: FARMERS TRIUMPH DESPITE ELECTION TAMPERING

Farmers overwhelmingly supported the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) and its single desk selling advantage in the recent CWB Director elections, despite the disgraceful display of election tampering by the Harper Conservative government, says Stewart Wells, President of the National Farmers Union (NFU).

Wells pointed out that only 20% of eligible voters in the CWB Director elections supported the federal government's position against the CWB. A total of 4 single desk supporters were elected in the 5 odd-numbered CWB districts. "By waiting until the election process was halfway finished, and then removing over 16,000 eligible votes from the voters' list, Prime Minister Stephen Harper tried to create confusion within the election itself," noted Wells. "In 1998, Harper said the CWB elections were a 'sham' – and so he tried everything possible in this election to make his unfounded statement come true."

Wells said the election tampering may have been a factor in the narrow defeat of single desk supporter Art Macklin in District 1. However, in District 3, which overlaps much of MP David Anderson's riding, single desk supporter Larry Hill increased his margin of victory, and ended up with the largest majority of any candidate, capturing 66% of the votes. "If David Anderson was truly representing his constituents, he would be a strong single desk supporter."

Wells said the government's anti-democratic actions have drawn editorial criticism from Saskatchewan's two largest daily newspapers. On December 2, Bruce Johnstone, Business Reporter for the Regina Leader Post, wrote: "The Tories also interfered with the ongoing director elections, arbitrarily disenfranchising 16,000 voters – as many as half the voters in some districts." Johnstone goes on to say: "Throughout this sorry episode, the Tories have used every dirty trick in the book to stifle debate, hamstringing CWB supporters, and stack the deck in their own favour."

Also on December 2, the editors of the Saskatoon Star-Phoenix wrote: "Certainly his [Strahl's] office did what it could to subvert the course of democracy during the recent vote for directors – including the class banana-republic trick of tampering with the voters' list in midstream."

“Farmers must now be on guard for more dirty tricks during an upcoming federal plebiscite on barley marketing,” stated Wells. “A vote against CWB barley marketing will be interpreted by this federal government as a vote against the CWB in general.”

Wells said the NFU congratulates all the candidates that took the time and effort to run a clean campaign and legitimately express their views. The legacy of this campaign, however, is that Canadian democracy is not safe in the hands of Stephen Harper, Chuck Strahl, and David Anderson, he concluded.

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