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national farmers union
In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FARMERS CALL ON GOVERNMENT TO RESPECT CWB ACT:

Representatives of farm and co-operative organizations across Canada agree the federal government should respect the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) Act and not circumvent farmers' right to determine the future of their marketing agency.

At a meeting in support of the CWB in Saskatoon July 27, officials of Canada's major farm groups voiced a common message to Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Chuck Strahl and his Parliamentary Secretary, MP David Anderson.

"The CWB is our Board, and it's our business," National Farmers Union (NFU) President Stewart Wells told a crowd at a public meeting held in a hotel across the street from where Strahl and Anderson were hosting a closed-door session with anti-CWB groups. "The federal government does not have the mandate to weaken the effectiveness of the CWB."

An estimated 250 farmers from across Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba participated in the pro-CWB rally under the theme: "CWB – Our Board, Our Business". The event was organized by the National Farmers Union in cooperation with the Canadian Federation of Agriculture (CFA). Farmers expressed support for the CWB single desk, and also came down hard on the government's plan to exclude producers from having a direct say in the future of their marketing agency.

CFA President Bob Friesen, speaking via a phone hookup from the CFA meeting in Newfoundland, said the federal government is "putting the cart before the horse" by mapping out a mechanism for implementing a dual market before farmers have even decided they want to go that route. Bill Dobson, President of Wild Rose Producers of Alberta (WRAP) and David Rolfe, President of Keystone Agricultural Producers (KAP) expressed similar concerns. Laurent Pellerin, President of the large Quebec farm organization, UPA, and Claude Gauthier, Vice-President of the Canadian Co-operative Association, also spoke to the meeting via the phone hookup.

MPs Wayne Easter and Ralph Goodale of the federal Liberals were joined on the podium by NDP MP Tony Martin, as well as Saskatchewan Agriculture Minister Mark Wartman and Manitoba Agriculture Minister Rosann Wowchuk. Easter said the federal government is actually "flaunting the law" by ignoring a section of the CWB Act which specifies any changes to the Act must be approved by farmers.

Producer car groups were represented by Bill Woods of West Central Road and Rail in Saskatchewan and Ken Eshpeter of Battle River Producer Car Group in Alberta. They noted the CWB plays a key role in ensuring farmers have access to producer cars and a market for that grain at tidewater.

Paul Stow of Mission Terminal, an independent grain terminal at Thunder Bay, said the CWB assists farmers market through terminals which are not owned by the major multinationals like Cargill and ADM. Ian McCreary, an elected Director of the CWB, said the Board is committed to representing the interests of western Canadian grain farmers.

Wells concluded that the loss of the CWB single desk would cost western Canadian farmers approximately \$800 million annually. He urged those at the meeting to call MPs and make their voices heard.

Earlier that day, an information picket was held by NFU members outside the hotel where the government was meeting, followed by an outdoor rally in a park where a bluegrass band entertained and short speeches in support of the CWB were made by a number of farmers.

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