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national farmers union

In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NFU MEMBERS JOIN FARMERS FROM ACROSS CANADA AT OTTAWA RALLY

National Farmers Union (NFU) President Stewart Wells and NFU Women's President Colleen Ross will be among the speakers April 5 at the "Solidarity Rally" on Parliament Hill in Ottawa.

The "Solidarity Rally" – aimed at focusing attention on the farm income crisis – grew out of a series of farm demonstrations across Ontario over the past few months. Farmers from all farm organizations and sectors will join together to focus national attention on the needs of the farm community.

The NFU is encouraging farmers and other citizens to join the action by "phoning in their message of solidarity with farmers" to Prime Minister Stephen Harper (613-992-4211) and Agriculture Minister Chuck Strahl (613-992-2940).

"Family farmers across Canada are being punished with this devastating income crisis," stated Wells. "The new Conservative government promised to invest in farm families, and it is crucial that they deliver on that promise now. Prices for wheat and corn are at hundred-year lows, while rising energy costs have made farm inputs more expensive than ever."

The resulting cash crunch means many farmers will be unable to make payments or borrow money to plant a crop this spring. Wells noted the Conservatives campaigned to introduce a simpler and more responsive income stabilization program that would address farmers' costs of production. "The time has come to honour that commitment," he stated.

Ontario farmers have been pushing the provincial and federal governments to move on new farm income stabilization plans. Ontario grains and oilseeds farmers developed a detailed Risk Management Plan (RMP) that offers an equitable solution. Colleen Ross, who farms near Iroquois, an hour south of Ottawa, said the NFU supports the Ontario RMP. "It has been developed by farmers and is ready to go," she said. "We need both levels of government to commit to fully fund this program and we need the commitment right now."

Ross added that Ontario farmers "feel they had a lot to do with electing this government, with all the new Conservative MPs representing farm ridings. Expectations are high for the Conservatives to deliver."

Wells concluded that commodity prices are under pressure from the World Trade Organization (WTO), which seeks to restrict farmers' market power while promoting increased trade. He called on the Canadian government to invest in the country's food producers by supporting supply-management systems and the Canadian Wheat Board single desk.

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