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national farmers union
In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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“DON’T GET BOGGED DOWN IN DETAILS” THE NEW ANTI-CWB MANTRA

When farmers step down off their combines this fall, they need to step right into the fight to retain their collective marketing agency, the Canadian Wheat Board, says the President of the National Farmers Union (NFU).

Stewart Wells says the release of the federal government’s strategy paper on destroying the effectiveness of the CWB clearly shows the battle lines are drawn. The report, released September 8, was prepared by a consulting firm following a closed-door, invitation-only meeting sponsored by the government in Saskatoon July 27.

One of the report’s recommendations is that the government should be “making the necessary changes and ... move forward quickly without getting bogged down in the details.” It also recommends a hand-picked “task force” to deal with problems that arise after the fact.

“It will have cost taxpayers tens of thousands of dollars for that secret meeting in Saskatoon in late July,” noted Wells. “And the conclusion coming out of it is to ignore the details and just destroy the CWB as quickly as possible. I am astounded at the incredible waste of taxpayers’ money by this government.”

The report recommends the government amend CWB legislation to create an open market for wheat and barley by the 2007-08 crop year. But it also recommends the government circumvent the legislation by taking “interim actions, where possible.”

Wells said it’s clear the government intends to place ideology above economics. “The CWB adds an extra \$800 million annually, over and above what they would receive from the ‘open market’, into western Canadian farmers’ pockets,” he said. “They want to move quickly on this because they rightfully fear that if farmers start talking about the economic details and how the CWB works, they’ll never be able to destroy it.”

“People not wearing ideological blinders have to pay attention to this now that harvest is winding down,” he said. “This government will say and do anything to destroy the Board. This is the real battle, and there is a tremendous amount at stake not just for farmers, but for all of western Canada.”

- 30 -

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