

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

JANUARY 23, 2007

AG POLICY FRAMEWORK SHOULD ADDRESS FARMERS' CONCERNS

The current round of public consultations on the so-called “next generation” of Canadian Agricultural Policy Framework (APF) offers family farmers “one last chance” to turn around decades of destructive policies, says Colleen Ross of Iroquois, Ontario, Women’s President of the National Farmers Union (NFU). She urged farmers to participate in the APF consultations in their region and “make their voices heard.”

She noted a federal government background paper prepared for the APF consultations actually suggests family farmers play only a minor role in the agricultural sector. “The real focus is on ensuring profitability for the big corporations,” she stated. “The only farms that are considered to be ‘commercial’ operations are those with gross returns over \$250,000. Those that must rely on off-farm income are dismissed as ‘lifestyle’ or ‘non-viable’ farms.”

“While the so-called ‘next generation’ of farm policy is being hyped as new and visionary, it’s actually a continuation of existing policies, continued Ross. “The current policies are clearly not working because we’re losing more and more family farmers every year.” She urged women farmers in particular to speak up at these consultations, and recommended the NFU research paper entitled “Farm Women and Canadian Agricultural Policy” – available on the NFU website at www.nfu.ca .

NFU President Stewart Wells of Swift Current, Saskatchewan, said the APF consultations, which got underway this week in BC, deliberately exclude the farm income crisis from the discussion. The APF meeting agenda includes: Innovation and Science, Markets and Trade, Food Safety and Quality, Renewal, Environment and Business Risk Management. “The question that farm people need to ask at these meetings is: Where is the Farm Income pillar?” stated Wells. “The Conservatives promised during last year’s election campaign to incorporate a ‘cost-of-production’ calculation into their farm income program. They have not followed through on that promise.”

NFU Ontario Board member Grant Robertson of Paisley, Ontario, said the causes of, and solutions to, the farm income crisis, need to be front and centre in any discussions on future directions for agriculture. “I find it astounding that no one in government seems to be asking the question of whether current agriculture policy is working for farmers,” stated Robertson. “Clearly, it isn’t. We are close to losing the family farm in this

generation. If that happens, things that Canadians take for granted, such as food safety and quality, healthy rural communities and a strong economy, may be in jeopardy.”

Robertson said all the evidence suggests the current direction of agricultural policy in Canada is an “unmitigated disaster” – yet the federal government seems to be pushing ahead with more of the same. “We have to ask the question: Is this out of ignorance or design?” he stated. “The farm crisis didn’t just happen overnight.”

The schedule for APF II consultations is available on the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada website at www.agr.gc.ca/nextgen : Consultations are slated for:

BC: Prince George (Jan 22), Fort St. John (Jan 24), Vancouver (Jan 25), Kelowna (Jan 26)

Alberta: Grande Prairie (Jan 29), Wainwright (Jan 31), Red Deer (Feb 1), Lethbridge (Feb 2)

Saskatchewan: Swift Current (Feb 5), Regina (Feb 6), Yorkton (Feb 7), North Battleford (Feb 9)

Manitoba: Dauphin (Feb 12), Winnipeg (Feb 14), Brandon (Feb 16)

Ontario: Sudbury (Feb 6), Kemptville (Feb 9), Belleville (Feb 13), Ridgeway (Feb 15), Woodstock (Feb 16), Toronto (Feb 26)

Quebec: Saint Hyacinthe (Feb 8)

Prince Edward Island: Charlottetown (Feb 19)

New Brunswick: Perth Andover (Feb 21), Moncton (Feb 23)

Nova Scotia: Truro (Feb 20), Kentville (Feb 23)

Newfoundland: Cornerbrook (Jan 29), St. John’s (Jan 31)

- 30 -

Contact: Grant Robertson, NFU Ontario Board Member (519) 353-4033
Stewart Wells, NFU President (306) 741-7694 or (306) 773-6852
Colleen Ross, NFU Women’s President (613) 652-1552
Terry Pugh, NFU Executive-Secretary (306) 652-9465