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national farmers union
In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HARPER GOVERNMENT STILL TRYING TO MANIPULATE CWB ISSUE

The federal government is clearly trying to do “damage control” by promising western farmers a plebiscite on wheat, following the results of a Manitoba referendum which showed overwhelming support for the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) single desk.

National Farmers Union (NFU) President Stewart Wells said the announcement by federal Agriculture Minister Chuck Strahl that a plebiscite on wheat would be held sometime in the future marks continuing manipulation by the government. The federal announcement comes on the heels of a Manitoba vote which showed that 70% of farmers support the CWB single desk for wheat and 62% support the single desk for barley.

“Strahl is finally getting the message that farmers support the single-desk,” said Wells. “Farmers are justifiably worried that if they lose the single desk for barley, the government will unilaterally remove it for wheat as well.”

Wells said if Strahl is serious about providing a meaningful vote, he should hold the promised plebiscite on wheat at the same time as the plebiscite on barley – scheduled to take place between January 31 and March 6. The federal plebiscite should also use the same fair and clear question that was suggested by farm groups and endorsed by the House of Commons. The NFU President noted Strahl is still insisting a voluntary CWB could thrive in a so-called dual market, despite his own task force dismissing that scenario as unrealistic.

Wells said the federal Agriculture Minister should also:

1. Recognize the validity of the recent CWB Director elections and follow the wishes of the majority of the farmer-elected Wheat Board Directors who support the single-desk;
2. Immediately lift the gag order against the CWB;
3. Immediately reinstate Adrian Measner as CEO of the CWB.

Wells said for the federal government to promise a wheat plebiscite while it is still obviously manipulating the barley question fits a continuing pattern of dirty tricks.

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