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national farmers union
In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MORE AT STAKE THAN JUST BARLEY IN FEDERAL PLEBISCITE

Farmers realize there is more at stake than just barley marketing in the upcoming federal plebiscite, says National Farmers Union (NFU) President Stewart Wells.

Wells said a vote in favour of weakening the CWB is a vote in favour of all the anti-democratic actions the Harper government has undertaken against farmers.

While federal Agriculture Minister Chuck Strahl announced a plebiscite on barley marketing will occur between January 31 and March 6, there was no indication what the question on the ballot will be. "The Harper government is being devious by concealing the wording," stated Wells. "If they were being fair and upfront they would have released the question sooner." [When former CWB Minister Ralph Goodale conducted a plebiscite on barley marketing in the 1990s, the question was publicized many months in advance.]

Wells said the plebiscite question should be identical to that requested by producer groups last fall. That question - which was endorsed by the House of Commons and which appears on the Manitoba provincial plebiscite this month - allows farmers a straightforward choice between the CWB single desk or the open market. The wording is as follows:

- A) I wish to maintain the ability to market all barley, both malting/food, with the continuing exception of feed barley sold domestically, through the CWB single desk system.*
- B) I wish to remove the single desk marketing system from the CWB and sell all barley through an open market system.*

Wells questioned why a poll on wheat marketing will not be included on the federal ballot, pointing out it would have vastly increased the value of the plebiscite at no additional cost.

"Certainly the Harper government has increased costs to farmers significantly over the last few months on this issue," Wells noted. "The cost of the Director elections went up because of the government's tampering with the voters' list. In addition, the government imposed an additional cost on farmers by unilaterally hiring Greg Arason at a higher salary than that paid to former CEO Adrian Measner."

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