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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NOVEMBER 21, 2007

**ONTARIO MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE VIOLATING PUBLIC TRUST:
NFU CALLS ON OMBUDSMAN TO LAUNCH INVESTIGATION**

LONDON, Ont—The National Farmers Union (NFU) has publicly released a report today submitted to the Ontario Ombudsman. The report provides details supporting the NFU's assertion that the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) is violating its public trust. The NFU report is a key step in a process of triggering an investigation by the Ombudsman into the goals and conduct of OMAFRA.

Today's report details numerous instances where OMAFRA is failing to protect the long-term interests of Ontario's citizens and refusing to shape and direct the province's food system in ways that citizens legitimately expect. The report also contains large amounts of new information on emerging threats that could potentially endanger urban and rural economies.

Commenting on the request to the Ombudsman, Ontario NFU Coordinator Grant Robertson said: "OMAFRA is violating its public trust to protect the citizens of Ontario, our communities, farms, and the prosperity of future generations. In its means and in its ends, OMAFRA is pursuing a set of goals that are at odds with those citizens want pursued. In doing so, the Ministry is undermining food security, sustainability, rural communities, and the economic well-being of Ontario's family farmers."

The NFU report lays out a set of goals and expectations that citizens have of OMAFRA. The report then demonstrates that OMAFRA itself, the Premier, and the Minister of Agriculture, like those who have held the same positions before them, all share and espouse these same goals and expectations. The report then goes on to show that, not only is OMAFRA not achieving those goals and expectations, but that it isn't even trying. Instead, it is pursuing another set of policies altogether.

"The public trust between Ontario citizens and OMAFRA is that the former trusts the latter to oversee and shape our food and agriculture systems to deliver health-enhancing food; employment and prosperity; thriving, multigenerational family farms; a clean and flourishing environment; sustainable production; fertile soils; and vibrant rural communities and economies. The ongoing farm crisis, a building rural crisis, the unprecedented expulsion of young farmers, food safety scares, a proliferation of environmental threats, and mounting evidence that our food production system is unsustainable all highlight the fact that OMAFRA is ignoring its public trust," says the report.

The full pdf version of the NFU's report to the Ontario Ombudsman is at www.nfu.ca/briefs/2007/Ombudsman-OMAFRA.pdf .

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For More Information:

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Robertson and Qualman will be at the NFU Annual National Convention in London, Ontario November 19 to 25. To reach them during Convention, call (519) 681-0600.