

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**

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## **AG MINISTER'S TACTICS SHOW DISDAIN FOR WESTERN FARMERS**

Federal Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz either doesn't trust the democratic process or he doesn't trust western Canadian farmers, says Don Kelsey, Saskatchewan Coordinator of the National Farmers Union (NFU).

Kelsey, who farms near Choiceland, Saskatchewan, said Ritz should realize that it is not the federal government's job to compel western Canadian barley growers to surrender control of barley and wheat marketing to a handful of multinational grain companies.

"The federal government has basically said that producers are not intelligent enough to know how to market grain, because farmers have shown time and again that they prefer to market through the Canadian Wheat Board single desk," said Kelsey. "The Harper government has a different agenda, and they will stop at nothing to destroy the CWB single desk, which has put an additional \$60 million annually into farmers' pockets for malting barley alone."

Kelsey said the meeting in Ottawa earlier this week where Ritz commanded the CWB representatives to follow the government's party line was a political stunt. "Legitimate farm organizations were excluded from the meeting," he said, adding that only the big grain companies, maltsters, brewers, and their shill farm groups were invited.

Kelsey concluded that Ritz's announcement that the federal government would introduce legislation to change the CWB Act amounts to an admission that the government has no confidence that it will win its appeal of a Federal Court case in Winnipeg February 26.

Kelsey also was critical of the appointment by Ritz of Ian White as the new CEO of the CWB. White comes from an executive position with Queensland Sugar, but was previously involved in AgPro Grain in the 1990s, when farmers' control over the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool was turned over to investors in the Toronto Stock Exchange.

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Contact: Don Kelsey, NFU SK Coordinator (306) 428-2258 or (306) 276-7574  
Terry Pugh, NFU Executive-Secretary (306) 652-9465