



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**RITZ INVITES ADM, CARGILL, VITERRA, AND RAHR MALTING TO
DETERMINE FUTURE OF FARMERS' MARKETING AGENCY**

OTTAWA, Ont.— “It’s shameful to see Canada’s Minister of Agriculture allying himself with the world’s biggest grain companies against this country’s farm families,” said NFU Board member Glenn Tait. Tait farms and raises barley and wheat near Meota, Saskatchewan (near North Battleford). He was in Ottawa today to hold a news conference critical of the government’s flawed direction and process regarding CWB barley marketing.

This morning, when Minister Ritz’s hand-picked team sat down to discuss how to terminate CWB barley marketing, the majority of the seats were filled by representatives of transnational grain, malting, and brewing corporations.

According to media reports, Ritz’s invitees included representatives of the Western Grain Elevators Association (4), the Malting Industry Association of Canada (4), the Brewers Association of Canada (1), and GrainVision (1). These ten industry representatives formed more than half the invitees to the meeting that the government has convened—filling 10 of the 19 non-government/non-CWB seats. For details, see Backgrounder.

“The government is now working openly with the dominant grain and malting corporations to dismantle CWB barley marketing. This represents a very real shift, and a disturbing one, compared to Conservative government tactics of just a year-and-a-half ago,” said Tait.

Today’s meeting is not the first closed-door meeting organized by this government to dismantle the CWB. In July, 2006, then-Minister Chuck Strahl convened a similar meeting of hand-picked anti-CWB organizations. But unlike today, Strahl *excluded* agribusiness corporations. When asked about his July 2006 invitee list, Strahl said “the two groups of people that we didn’t invite were those who said that they’d never consider anything but the single-desk option ... and people who would be potentially in competition with the Wheat Board. So, we didn’t invite Cargill, for example, or grain companies....” Eighteen months later, Cargill, the grain companies, and other corporate reps. *are* invited: in fact, they’re occupying most of the seats.

Tait commented: “Today’s meeting has helped farmers in one way: It has lifted the veil. It is now clear that some of the world’s biggest grain, malt, and brewing corporations are behind and beside Gerry Ritz. Ritz has made himself a tool of those who seek to profit at farmers’ expense. Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s government has teamed up with Cargill, ADM, and Rahr Malting against farmers and their Wheat Board. Farmers should ask: Do these huge corporations want the CWB out of barley marketing so that these companies can pay barley farmers more? Or are they working for the end of the CWB so they can pay less?”

Tait concluded: “Today, farmers, through their collective marketing agency the CWB, control malt-barley marketing. And farmers capture the profits. Cargill, Rahr, ADM, and Viterra want that control, and they want those profits. It’s a ‘no brainer.’ That’s why they’re pushing the government. That’s why company representatives are in Ottawa today.”

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Backgrounder to the NFU's January 29, 2008 news release

Several of the organizations invited to Minister Ritz's meeting are creations of agribusiness corporations, these include:

The Western Grain Elevator Association is an organization of Western Canada's largest grain companies. Members include Cargill, James Richardson International, and Viterra.

The Malting Industry Association of Canada represents the owners of Canada's major malting plants: Cargill, Archer Daniels Midland, Rahr Malting, Viterra, and others.

The Brewers Association of Canada represents brewing companies operating in Canada. The Association's members account for more than 98 per cent of domestic beer production. Members include: Labatt Breweries of Canada (Inbev Corporation), Molson Canada (Molson Coors), Sleeman Breweries Ltd. (Sapporo).

GrainVision is an industry organization. Its actual makeup and membership are not easily discernable. According to a March 28, 2005 GrainVision letter, it appears to represent several agribusiness and anti-CWB organizations, including Cargill, Rahr Malting, James Richardson International, Pioneer Hi-Bred Limited, and the Winnipeg Commodity Exchange. The Saskatchewan Gazette lists GrainVision's head office address as 2800-1 Lombard Place, Winnipeg, Manitoba. That address is also the office of James Richardson International.