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national farmers union
In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FARM INCOME, DEBT CRISIS SHOULD BE PRIORITY FOR GOVERNMENT

The National Farmers Union (NFU) extends sincere congratulations and thanks to candidates of all political parties who ran in the federal election.

NFU President Stewart Wells said the NFU will work to ensure the newly-elected Parliament implements programs and policies that will enhance family farms right across the country. "There is a lot of work that needs to be done, regardless of what government happens to be in power," stated Wells. "Many farmers are in desperate circumstances because of low farm incomes, and there is growing concern over farm debt loads."

Wells pointed out farm debt in Canada increased from \$33.7 billion to over \$54 billion within the past decade, with nearly half that amount owed to federally-chartered banks. If the credit squeeze continues and asset values fall, many farmers may find themselves over-extended in the spring at a time when they desperately need financing. "There is a tremendous need for measures to strengthen farmers' market power, safeguard farm incomes and protect family farms from unfair debt pressures," he said.

The NFU President said in the 2006 federal election, Canadians gave Stephen Harper's minority government a short leash. "In this election, voters extended that leash only very slightly. The Conservatives increased their popular vote by only 1.3%, so that shouldn't be interpreted as a huge increase in the government's mandate." He added that when the low voter turnout is taken into account (59.1% of eligible voters across Canada cast ballots) just 22% of eligible voters chose the Harper Conservatives.

"It's still a minority government, and the Parliamentary process needs to be respected," concluded Wells.

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