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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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FEDERAL GOVERNMENT MUST HELP POTATO AND VEGETABLE GROWERS IN PEI

Swift Current, SK—"The Federal government must show leadership in helping potato and vegetable growers that were devastated by wet weather in PEI last fall," says Stewart Wells, President of the National Farmers Union.

In a letter sent today to federal Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz, and copied to PEI's Agriculture Minister George Webster, Wells reiterated the NFU's calls for immediate assistance. (Copies of the letter are available upon request at 306-652-9465.)

In part, the NFU letter states: "Many acres were not harvested at all as farmers tried to avoid storage losses, especially with potatoes. Nevertheless, there were devastating losses that did occur in storage. Many farmers dumped and pumped out thousands of tonnes of potatoes from their warehouses over the winter. Calls for disaster assistance have been received by your office ever since last fall, but the Federal and Provincial "safety net" programs have so far failed to deliver any meaningful assistance to PEI's affected farmers. This is unacceptable."

"The costs associated with potato and vegetable growing are very high, and individual farmers cannot be expected to pick up the extra costs of weather-related disasters," concluded Wells. "It is time for the Government of Canada to act now, as spring planting bills are only a few weeks away."

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