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national farmers union
In Union Is Strength

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**NFU CATTLE MEETINGS IN PEACE COUNTRY CREATE MOMENTUM
FOR CHANGE**

Cattle producers in the Peace River region of Alberta and BC are looking to create positive changes in the beef marketing system, following a round of public meetings in the area.

Despite bad roads and inclement weather, a large number of farmers in the Peace River country turned out to community meetings sponsored by the National Farmers Union (NFU) in Sexsmith, Alberta, and Farmington, BC, in late January.

At the meetings, the findings of a comprehensive report on the cattle industry in Canada were presented by the author of the report, NFU Director of Research, Darrin Qualman. The report concludes that a lack of competition among large beef packers and grocery retailers is the primary cause of low farm gate prices for cattle. The report also outlines a number of practical, concrete measures that can be taken to restore a more balanced marketplace.

NFU National Board member Neil Peacock, who raises cattle near Sexsmith, Alberta, said it is clear that farmers support the NFU research and want more meetings to be conducted on this and other pressing farm issues. He cited support for the NFU's initiatives from municipalities in the area as well.

“There is a lot of frustration in the farming community,” stated Peacock. “People have felt isolated, and as a result of that they also felt helpless, and at times, hopeless. But out of these meetings, I get the sense that farmers are feeling much more optimistic, and they’re realizing that if we work together, we can change things.”

He said the low cattle prices at the farm gate are not the only issue farmers are concerned about. “On the Alberta side of the border, there is a lot of mistrust about the Alberta Livestock Meat Strategy (ALMS),” he said. “The cost of the program, and much of the liability involved, is being downloaded onto farmers, who can’t afford it.”

There is also a justified perception among farmers that the interests of oil, gas and pipeline companies are being given a higher priority than landowners, said Peacock.

He concluded that the NFU is showing that it is an organization prepared to lead the way for positive changes for rural communities. For a copy of the report entitled: “The Farm Crisis and the Cattle Sector: Toward a New Analysis and New Solutions”, log on to www.nfu.ca .

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