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**national farmers union**  
*In Union Is Strength*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**FATE OF ONTARIO SINGLE DESK FOR PORK SHOULD BE DECIDED BY VOTE**

Ontario pork farmers should be allowed to vote directly on whether to retain single desk marketing for hogs through the Ontario Pork Producers Marketing Board (OPPMB), says Grant Robertson, National Farmers Union (NFU) Coordinator for Ontario.

A recent decision by the Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission (OFPMC) stripped the OPPMB of its central sales desk for all hogs marketed in the province, replacing it with a voluntary fee-for-service mandate and reducing its role to a lobby and fee-collection agency. The single desk was first established in the 1960s following pressure from hog farmers for better prices in the marketplace.

The NFU intervened in the OFPMC hearings on the issue held during the summer of 2008. The written brief submitted by the NFU urged the retention of the central sales desk, noting this as the most effective method for farmers to gain market power and achieve higher prices at the farm gate.

Robertson said the final say on the OPPMB's single desk should rest with farmers themselves through a democratic vote by producers. He said the Commission should not have ruled that the single desk would be phased out without allowing farmers to vote on the issue. He added that the time frame designated for changing Ontario Pork's mandate and role is unrealistic.

Robertson called on Leona Dombrowsky, the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, to intervene in the process to protect the interests of family farmers. In a letter to the Minister, Robertson urged Dombrowsky to ensure that no changes that affect the hog board single desk be made at this time or in the future without a democratic, open and fair expression of opinion from farmers through a producer vote.

"In the end, this is a fairly simple and straightforward issue," stated Robertson. "The economic future of farmers and their marketing organizations should be decided only by farmers, not by bureaucrats. Pork farmers have been abandoned by many who should be supporting them. The NFU demands that the government call a democratic producer vote to allow pork farmers to decide their own future."