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**national farmers union**

***In Union Is Strength***

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**JUNE 29, 2009**

## **GAG ORDER ON CANADIAN WHEAT BOARD AN INSULT TO FARMERS**

The Harper government's gag order on the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) is "an insult to farmers," says the President of the National Farmers Union (NFU). The Federal Court of Appeal last week overturned a lower court decision that had earlier ruled Harper's gag order illegal.

Stewart Wells said the government's action amounts to a "gag order on farmers" because it is farmers who pay the costs of running the marketing agency, and control over the CWB should remain with the farmer-elected CWB Board of Directors. "Farmers pay the costs and farmers should decide how their money is spent," stated Wells. "This government is tying the hands of farmers and officials who really understand grain marketing. The single desk system puts millions of dollars of extra money into farmers' pockets, but the gag order prohibits the CWB from explaining how the single desk works."

Wells said the Harper government has used many tactics, including the gag order, to undermine the CWB. The Harper government has changed voters' lists in the middle of CWB Director elections. The government has also removed spending limits, thereby allowing unlimited advertising against the single desk. "The government is encouraging people to spend more and more money to put out misinformation about the Board, while at the same time they gag the CWB and farmers running for Director positions. Farmers should know they may only be one court ruling away from having the federal government impose its will and override the interests of western Canadian farmers."

NFU Saskatchewan Coordinator Glenn Tait said control over the CWB must reside with the CWB Directors who are elected by farmers, and not with government. "It is a small group of ideologues within the Conservative Party who are pushing for the implementation of their own world view," he said. "I am very dismayed that after last fall's director elections, where farmers spoke very clearly in favour of the Wheat Board, that Harper would re-impose the gag. Farmers vote for their representatives on the CWB Board of Directors, and farmers expect their elected Directors to run it."

Tait said a minority of elected MPs are trying to dictate to the 80% majority of elected CWB Directors how to run their own organization.

Wells said the real battle for control over grain marketing in Canada is about the billions of extra dollars in revenue that currently go to farmers as a result of the CWB single desk. Private multinational corporations want to undermine the CWB's authority and pocket that money as profit for themselves.

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