

# Friends of the Canadian Wheat Board

--a coalition of farmers and other Canadians in support of democracy and a farmer-controlled CWB

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## Decision reserved in Friends of Canadian Wheat Board Court Case

**Winnipeg, MB, January 20, 2010**—Although Justice Hon. James Russell reserved his decision, the Friends of the Canadian Wheat Board (FCWB) today said they were pleased with the hearing in Federal Court in Winnipeg.

Two months prior to 2008 CWB farmer director elections, Minister Ritz sent a confidential letter to the CEO of the Canadian Wheat Board directing him to remove the names of all CWB permit holders, without their knowledge, who had not delivered grain to the CWB within the last 18 months. This initiative was in clear violation of both the letter and spirit of Section 3.02 (1) of the Canadian Wheat Board Act, an Act of the Parliament of Canada. It was clear from all available evidence that Minister Ritz's motivation for his illegal intervention in the election was an ill-advised attempt to remove permit holders from the voters' list whom he believed were supporters of the CWB's single desk marketing authority. In the same election a number of prairie Conservative MPs used taxpayers' money to send letters to other farmers on the voters' list urging them to support anti-CWB candidates. Clearly the federal government was attempting to get through the back door, illegally, what it knew it couldn't get legally through the front door, Parliament--through an amendment to the CWB Act in the House of Commons.

Fortunately, farmers were not fooled by Mr. Ritz's shenanigans. Four out of the five constituencies holding director elections in 2008 returned strong pro-CWB candidates to the board. Unfortunately, farmers were forced once again to spend their own money—not taxpayers'—to defend their democratic rights in a federal court law. It is a sad commentary on democracy in our great country when ordinary citizens have to take their own federal government to court to force it to obey the law of the land. In 2007, the *FCWB* took then minister Chuck Strahl to court when he tried to remove the marketing of barley from the CWB's mandate through an Order-in-Council—a federal cabinet decision taken behind closed doors. The *Friends* won this court challenge and again on appeal a few months later.

--- 30 ---

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