



NFU gains stable-funding accreditation in New Brunswick, and other NFU achievements in that province

NFU members across Canada should be proud of recent NFU successes in New Brunswick. We have gained accreditation under the new NB *Agricultural Producers Registration and Farm Organizations Funding Act*; significantly increased our activity in NB; and, in the lead-up to accreditation, successfully canvassed in the province, *adding over 120 new members in less than one year*—more than doubling our membership.

Stable funding in New Brunswick

The National Farmers Union in New Brunswick is now accredited as a general farm organization in New Brunswick. ... The NFU has met all of the criteria for accreditation as a general farm organization under the Agricultural Producers Registration and Farm Organizations Funding Act and regulations.

—NB Minister of Agriculture Ronald Ouellette in a February 1 news release

Several provinces have legislation wherein farmers register their farms and pay a fee to a farm organization. Manitoba, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, and Quebec all have “stable funding” legislation that requires that farmers pay a fee, and then directs that money to the farm organization that farmers choose. (Some provinces, such as Manitoba and Quebec, do not give farmers a choice: mandating only one organization.)

In December 2007, NB implemented its new *Agricultural Producers Registration and Farm Organizations Funding Act*. Under the *Act*, farmers who want to receive preferential tax treatment on farm fuel and farm vehicle licences must register their farms. The registration fee ranges from \$150 to \$500, depending on farm revenues.

The NB *Act* set out certain criteria for any organization seeking accreditation and participation. Initially, the NFU did not qualify, falling short in terms of geographic representation—we were a few members short in two counties. Following another round of canvassing, *(continued on page 7...)*

Ritz links arms with Cargill and ADM to intimidate CWB: Ritz threatens to introduce legislation “within three weeks”: NFU and allies hold news conference in Ottawa

January 29th featured a flurry of activity surrounding farmers’ fight to safeguard their CWB.

Closed-door meeting

The day began with a closed-door meeting at an undisclosed Ottawa location. Minister of Agriculture Gerry Ritz summoned the CWB to the meeting. The Minister invited a who’s-who of anti-CWB groups: the Western Barley Growers; Grain Growers of Canada; Marketing Choice Alliance; Western Canadian Wheat Growers, and Alberta Barley Commission. Most troubling, however, and a new development in the government’s ongoing assault on farmers’ CWB, Ritz filled the rooms with representatives of some of the world’s most powerful agribusiness corporations, he stacked the invitee list with representatives of the grain and malting companies that stand to profit if the CWB is stripped of its barley marketing mandate. *(continued on page 2...)*

(Ritz links arms with Cargill and ADM... from page 1)

Ritz's invitees included four representatives of the Western Grain Elevators Association, four from the Malting Industry Association of Canada, one from the Brewers Association, and one from GrainVision. These ten industry reps made up more than half the invitees to Ritz's meeting—filling 10 of the 19 non-government/non-CWB seats. (See sidebar box for more information on these industry associations.)

In a January 29 news release, the NFU said: "It's shameful to see Canada's Minister of Agriculture allying himself with the world's biggest grain companies against this country's farm families." The release continued: The government is now working *openly* with the dominant grain and malting corporations to dismantle CWB barley marketing. This represents a very real shift, and a disturbing development.

The January 29 meeting is not the first closed-door meeting organized by this government to dismantle the CWB. In July, 2006, then-Minister Chuck Strahl convened a similar meeting of hand-picked anti-CWB organizations. But unlike the recent meeting, in 2006, Strahl *excluded* agribusiness corporations. When asked about his July 2006 invitee list, Strahl said "the two groups of people that we didn't invite were those who said that they'd never consider anything but the single-desk option ... and people who would be potentially in competition with the Wheat Board. So, we didn't invite Cargill, for example, or grain companies...." Eighteen months later, Cargill, the grain companies, and other corporate reps *are* invited: they occupied most of the seats.

The NFU news release commented: "Today's meeting helped farmers in one way: It lifted the veil. It is now clear that some of the world's biggest grain, malt, and brewing corporations are behind and beside Gerry Ritz. Ritz has made himself a tool of those who seek to profit at farmers' expense. Prime Minister Stephen Harper's government has teamed up with Cargill, ADM, and Rahr Malting against farmers and their Wheat Board. Farmers should ask: Do these huge corporations want the CWB out of barley marketing so that these companies can pay barley farmers more? Or are they working for the end of the CWB so they can pay less?"

Ottawa press conference

The NFU and other pro-CWB organizations wrote Minister Ritz prior to his January 29 meeting asking to attend. The Minister sent no response. As a result,

representatives of the NFU and other pro-CWB groups travelled to Ottawa to hold a January 29 news conference to draw attention to the government's grossly inappropriate course and tactics.

NFU Board member Glenn Tait, Friends of the CWB representative Butch Harder, Save My CWB representative Ken Sigurdson, and Friends of the CWB representative Bill Woods held a press conference in the Charles Lynch press gallery in the Centre Block of the Parliament Buildings at 10AM (Ottawa time). Media coverage was very good—from media present in Ottawa, others monitoring on phone lines, and others who saw the NFU news releases and called to request interviews.

NFU National Board member Glenn Tait represented our organization. Tait raises grains, oilseeds, and cattle near North Battleford. In the news conference, Tait characterized Ritz's meeting as "nothing more than a forum for the loudest and the strongest of the anti-CWB forces to bully, by weight of numbers, the staff of the Canadian Wheat Board."

Bill Woods—a strong proponent of producer car loading and a representative of Friends of the CWB—had a similar message, saying that it is clear that the Minister "intends to browbeat the Wheat Board today at this meeting into forfeiting barley marketing to the malting and grain companies." Woods continued: "The Minister tries to justify his actions by saying that this is what farmers want. Nothing could be further from the truth. Ritz tries to back up his position by referring to a bizarre plebiscite which the Harper Government conjured up last year. The so-called plebiscite resembled a rigged election in a banana republic. The plebiscite was remarkable in that it managed to yield results completely opposite to the results of the last five farmer elections for the CWB Board of Directors. These CWB elections have consistently produced results wherein eight out of ten of the elected Directors are strong CWB supporters."

Ken Sigurdson represented Save My CWB. He delivered several key points to the news conference. "One of the groups invited to the meeting with the Minister is the Western Barley Growers Association. It has 130 members. They have four seats at the table. In contrast, the National Farmers Union has thousands of members across this country. They've been shut out," said Sigurdson.

(continued on page 4...)

Did someone say 'local food'?

NFU research initiative on the benefits of local

What is the impact of local food on rural communities? How can a move toward relocalizing food systems benefit farmers? Can these initiatives discipline corporate control within the food chain and help Canada to become more self-sustaining? What is the economic potential of local food for farmers? Can local food help us regain a fair and adequate share of the retail food dollar? These are some of the questions that we are going to address in a series of NFU research reports currently underway.

NFU members in Ontario and across the country have taken a leadership role in the local food movement—on the policy side, through education and advocacy, and in practice. Local and regional marketing networks, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), local certification initiatives, and various 'buy local' campaigns have swept across the country. The NFU wants to take a closer look, and it wants to help create the knowledge base upon which rural and urban Canadians can work to create a better food system.

A dedicated NFU associate member, Terran Giacomini, is onboard to explore some of the financial and economic arguments in favour of local food. Terran is in Saskatoon at the National Office until mid-February to learn more about the NFU approach to local food systems. Then she goes back to her home

town and continues to work from Ontario. The NFU analyses will include research derived from document analysis of key reports and interviews with contacts in Ontario. The reports will also consider local food in connection with some of the social, political and environmental issues affecting Canadians such as food security, climate change, and food sovereignty.

The NFU is considering reports on several of the following topics:

- Local food as a way of increasing farm income
- Local food and needless or 'redundant' trade
- The effects of local trade on community economic development
- Local food and externalities: how local food costs less
- Local food and energy use in an age of oil/natural gas depletion and climate change
- Local food initiatives in practice
- Local food, hunger, food security, and food sovereignty
- Local food, health, culture, and biodiversity

You can contact Terran by email at terrangiac@gmail.com.

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NFU Livestock Crisis research continuing

NFU members, officials, and staff continue work on a major report on the current profit crisis for livestock farmers. The report is expected in late-March and will go far beyond the current discussion about high grain prices and currency values: it will look at structural changes in North American markets—Free Trade, export dependence, and the ascendancy of Cargill and Tyson—and how these factors set the stage for the current crisis.

Look for more in upcoming issues.

(Ritz links arms with Cargill and ADM... from page 4)

He also commented: "The CWB isn't the only issue. The Port of Churchill, farmer-owned elevators, the right to load producer cars, the East-West movement of grain in this country, the Canadian Grain Commission, and KVD and our quality system will all be undermined if the Harper government is allowed to eliminate the CWB." Ken's son Brendan assisted at the news conference. Brendan is the webmaster for Save My CWB. Save My CWB staff person Bruce Dodds also assisted at the news conference.

Butch Harder spoke on behalf of the Friends of the CWB. Harder is a former CWB Director. He explained to media that farmers are deeply concerned about what the Harper Government is doing. "For ideological reasons, this government is riding roughshod over prairie farmers, the majority of whom support a strong CWB," said Harder.

Government threatens legislation

Around noon, Minister of Agriculture Gerry Ritz emerged from his meeting to issue an ultimatum to the CWB. He told reporters that he intends to introduce legislation "within three weeks" to terminate the CWB's mandate over barley marketing. Ritz told reporters that

he had brought the CWB representatives to Ottawa to instruct them to return to Winnipeg, attend CWB Board meetings scheduled for the following two days, and extract from the CWB Board of Directors a resolution to endorse the government's plan to move ahead with legislation and to co-operate in formulating that single-desk-terminating bill.

In a January 29 "Minister's Column", Ritz said: "The CWB is holding board meetings over the coming days. By the conclusion of those meetings, Western Canadian barley producers made it clear they fully expect the CWB to publicly support barley marketing freedom.

The CWB must respond to this mandate from the entire barley value chain by supporting the Government of Canada as we follow through on our commitment to deliver barley marketing freedom."

Minister Ritz (commenting on his demand that the CWB endorse his plan to move forward with legislation) said "It would certainly take the opposition parties' stinger away, if the board recommends this as the right path forward."

Parliament is scheduled to break for a week February 18. Ritz says he will try to introduce legislation before that break. *(continued on page 5...)*

Ritz's rhetoric

The language used by Gerry Ritz, a Minister of the Crown, to describe the CWB, an agency of government and farmers, is unprecedented. Examples include:

In a January 9 news release, Ritz called the CWB "an out of touch, centrally-controlled monopoly." He called its new CashPlus malt barley program "a plan that promises to be heavily bureaucratic, ineffective and contrary to the will of farmers and industry" and he lashed out at what he calls its "attempts...to invent an imitation marketplace."

Here's a paragraph from Ritz's January 11 op-ed, commenting on the CashPlus malt barley marketing program: "It's unfortunate that the CWB refuses to cooperate. They are failing to meet farmers' expectations, failing to publicly consult with Western farmers and failing to honour the wishes of the majority of Western Canadian barley farmers who are demanding marketing choice. Is there really any wonder why both industry and producer groups have rejected the CWB's proposed cash pricing program? This scheme is nothing more than a diversion while still allowing the Board to retain a centrally-controlled monopoly."

Here's an excerpt from Ritz's January 17 news release announcing the closed-door meeting for January 29: "There is obviously a major gap between what producers and the industry want and where the Canadian Wheat Board insists on going.... It's high time the CWB stops fighting with producers and gets in a room with them to start hammering out real options for marketing choice. ... The CWB has obviously ignored industry in putting this program together.... Now the CWB is forcing the program on the industry.... That is unacceptable and the Government will ensure farmers are heard.... It is time the CWB really listens and starts to put farmer and industry interests ahead of their own. This meeting will be a perfect opportunity to do so."

Given the Harper government's own "centrally-controlled" management style, this sort of over-the-top rhetoric must be endorsed by the Prime Minister. Can anyone imagine the government using similar language to describe a private grain company? Would Harper/Ritz ever call Cargill "an out of touch, centrally-controlled monopoly"? Would the government ever suggest that increasingly powerful grain companies are guilty of "attempts...to invent an imitation marketplace"? Harper and Ritz's approach and rhetoric reveal a level of government aggression and intolerance seldom displayed in public.

Minister huddles with agribusiness to plot future of CWB

Many organizations invited to Minister Ritz's meeting are creatures of agribusiness corporations, these include:

The Western Grain Elevator Association is an organization of Western Canada's largest grain companies. Members include Cargill, James Richardson International, and Viterra.

The Malting Industry Association of Canada represents the owners of Canada's major malting plants: Cargill, Archer Daniels Midland, Rahr Malting, Viterra, and others.

Brewers Association of Canada members include: Labatt Breweries of Canada (Inbev Corporation), Molson Canada (Molson Coors), Sleeman Breweries Ltd. (Sapporo).

GrainVision is an industry organization. Its membership is not easily discernable. According to a March, 2005 GrainVision letter, it appears to represent several agribusiness and anti-CWB organizations, including Cargill, Rahr Malting, James Richardson International, Pioneer Hi-Bred, and the Winnipeg Commodity Exchange. The *Saskatchewan Gazette* lists GrainVision's head-office address as 2800-1 Lombard Place, Winnipeg. That address is also the office of James Richardson International.

Demonstrations

January 29 also saw farmer demonstrations, despite -35 temperatures. NFU members Dave Bailey, Jim Schick, and Cam Goff set up an information picket at Gerry Ritz's office in North Battleford. They demonstrated their support for the CWB, answered media calls, and tried to help Ritz's staff understand the deep support the CWB enjoys among farmers.

In Swift Current, Glen Reimer, Paul Harmon, Harold Blodgett, Harold Horvey, Dixie Green, Allan Haggart, and Norman Beach picketed in front of MP David Anderson's Office. Anderson is Minister Ritz's Parliamentary Secretary and an aggressive enemy of the CWB.

More demonstrations are planned. (See box below regarding a bus to Winnipeg.)

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Major demonstration planned for Winnipeg, February 26

SEATS AVAILABLE ON BUS TO EVENT

On February 26, the Court will hear the federal government's appeal of farmers' win on CWB barley marketing.

The NFU and other groups are working to get farmers to Winnipeg for that event, and to demonstrate outside to show their support of the CWB, and to show solidarity with CWB Directors and employees.

The NFU is chartering a bus to get farmers to Winnipeg. The bus will travel Highway 1 from Swift Current to Winnipeg, with stops as needed (perhaps Regina and Whitewood?). The bus would travel to Winnipeg on February 25. It would return February 27. The cost for the bus trip would be \$100. Hotel costs are extra.

To reserve your seats on the bus to Winnipeg, please email Diane Neufeld at neufeld@nfu.ca or send a fax to (306) 664-6226.

If there is enough interest, and if we can get enough confirmed participants early enough, there is a possibility of chartering a second bus. If, however, there is not enough interest, we may have to cancel the bus. **So, please, respond with a firm booking as soon as possible.**

Important meeting on western shortline railways, February 16

The NFU, in cooperation with Brandon University, is organizing a one-day symposium on “**Railway Branchlines, Shortlines and the Future of Rural Communities**”.

The symposium will be held **Saturday, February 16, 2008 in the Lewis Whitehead Lecture Theatre (212 Clark Hall) at Brandon University in Brandon, Manitoba. The symposium will begin at 10:00 AM and conclude at 4:30 PM, with a one-hour break at noon.**

The purpose of the symposium is to focus on the economic challenges of communities which have lost, or may lose, their rail line service. But we also want to examine solutions and explore options, such as shortline railways. Saskatchewan has a number of successful shortline operations that have taken root in the last ten years. Would this model work in other provinces?

We urge you to come to this symposium and participate in the discussions.

OUR BOARD OUR BUSINESS

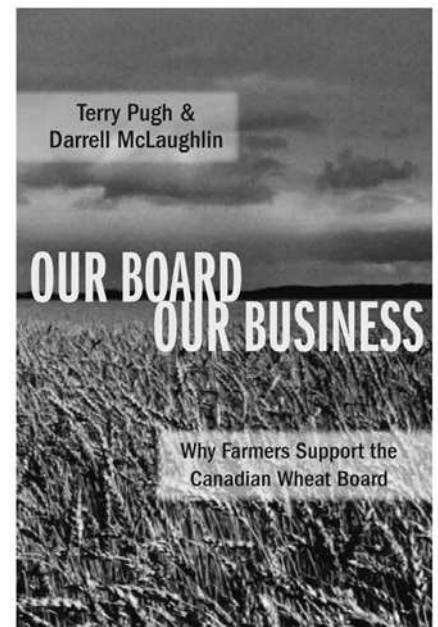
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Why Farmers Support the Canadian Wheat Board edited by Terry Pugh & Darrell McLaughlin

Published by
FERNWOOD PUBLISHING www.fernwoodpublishing.ca
NATIONAL FARMERS UNION www.nfu.ca

Available April 2007
order from the NFU
2717 Wentz Ave., Saskatoon, SK
306-652-9465
(\$14.95 plus \$2 s&h)
also available at your
local bookstore or contact
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The central purpose of this book is to help farmers and non-farmers better understand the essential role of the Canadian Wheat Board in the lives of western grain producers and their communities, and the Canadian economy. The need for such an understanding has been made all the more urgent by Prime Minister Harper's neo-liberal open market agenda which will guarantee corporate domination of Canadian grains. This book, sets out the context, operational mechanism and role of the CWB, making the case for its economic, social and political value.

(NFU gains stable-funding accreditation in NB, from page 1)

the application was resubmitted. On February 1, the Minister announced the NFU had gained full accreditation under the *Act*; farmers, upon paying their farm business registration fees, now have the option to choose to join the Agricultural Alliance of New Brunswick or the National Farmers Union.

Accreditation under the *Act* creates the potential for further increases in membership and activity.

Increased activity in NB

While stable-funding accreditation in NB may lead to more members and activity in the province, accreditation is also the *result* of increased level of activity in the province over the past year-and-a-half. Long-time members and new ones have been working hard to increase the NFU's visibility in the province. National Office has been supporting these efforts by helping prepare letters, mail drops, flyers, news releases, and briefs.

NFU in NB members have been active at trade shows—staffing booths and handing out NFU information. They've had several meetings with the Minister and his staff to discuss a range of issues. They've prepared numerous flyers and sent these to major commodity groups in the province. They've phoned existing and potential members. And they've presented briefs that detail agricultural problems and solutions.

Many, many NFU members pitched in to help make all this work possible. A membership team consisting of seven members came together in late-2006 and worked throughout 2007 to build the NFU in NB. Two people, however, stood out for their tremendous and unceasing efforts: Harold Culberson and Barbara Somerville. They worked tirelessly during the past 14 months, building on the firm foundation laid down by NFU leaders and members in New Brunswick over the past four decades.

Until the NFU in NB holds its next regional meeting, in March, the following members have volunteered to stand as executive board members: Betty M. Brown, Jean-Eudes Chiasson, Gary W. Jamieson, Robert L. Jeppeson, and Barb Somerville (who is acting as interim secretary). Judith Barr has agreed to continue her duties as the accountant for the NFU in NB and she will assume the position of treasurer for the new board.

In addition to the incredible amount of work by NB members, contributions by NFU National Board members, NFU President Stewart Wells, and National Office staff such as Joan Lange, Diane Neufeld, Terry Pugh, and Darrin Qualman all helped us attain the goal of increased membership and activity in NB.

Canvassing: members are key

Gaining stable funding accreditation in NB is an important achievement. But the achievement that we might be most proud of is the success over the past year of volunteer canvassing among the province's farmers.

Many NFU members contributed to the success of the year-long canvass in New Brunswick. Many made phone calls, suggested the names of possible members, and made other contributions. But much of the actual driving-around canvassing was done by long-time NFU member Harold Culberson. Harold knew that it was do-or-die, that to qualify, the NFU had to increase its membership. Over the past year, over several months of canvassing, the NFU in NB added over 100 new members.

New Brunswick's recent experience with canvassing has relevance to other NFU Regions. The NFU enjoys deep support among farmers in every province. But those farmers won't become NFU members unless we ask. The experience in New Brunswick showed that asking works, that a coordinated canvass—mailings, phoning, and driving in to farmers' yards—can yield large membership increases.

Conclusion

Recent success in achieving stable funding accreditation in Ontario, Prince Edward Island, and New Brunswick has made the NFU a bigger, stronger, more effective, more resilient organization. We've gained thousands of members. We've achieved a better balance among our Western, Central, and Maritime regions. We've expanded our activity, increased our funding, expanded our staff, and added new issues to our policy, education, and advocacy work.

NFU members across Canada should be proud of our accomplishments, happy that our organization is growing, and positive about our future. In Union is Strength.

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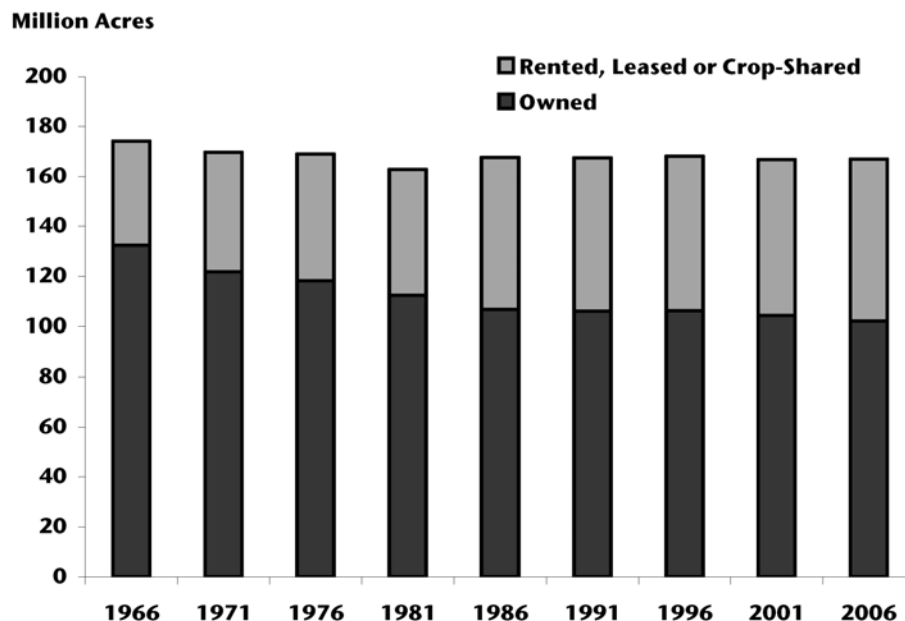
A nation of tenants?

Canadian agriculture today may stand at a critical decision point: Will local farm families continue to be the owners of this nation's farm and food land? Or will that land increasingly come under the ownership of investors, corporations, non-farmers, and the financial elite?

The history of Agriculture all over the world displays a similar pattern: Over time, land tends to concentrate in the hands of the wealthy; farmers increasingly become disposed of their land. Remember, Canada was settled largely as a result of desperate European immigrants crossing the ocean to an uncertain future because they so valued land, and because there was none to be had in Europe.

Right now, we're seeing increasing interest among investors and non-farmers in farm land. Farm families, financially weakened and dispirited by two decades of farm financial crisis are not well-positioned to outbid the global financial elite.

Land Tenure, Canada, 1968-2006



Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Agriculture, various years.

There are about 90 million acres of cropland in Canada. Assuming an average value of that land at about \$2,000 per acre (actual values vary widely), a 10% deposit on 10% of Canadian farmland is less than \$2 billion. Today, Microsoft offered \$44.6 billion to buy Yahoo.

We are in the fastest food supply drawdown since WWII. The world may be about to become very food short. If this is true, and if the global financial elite suddenly come to understand that food is scarce and, thus, dear, they may turn their collective attention to the world's farmland. If that happens, and if we do not have policies in place to keep land in the hands of farmers, Canada's food land may quickly pass out of our control.

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