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national farmers union
In Union Is Strength

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NFU SAYS RITZ'S WORKING GROUP REPORT IS SHOCKINGLY HOLLOW

Saskatoon, Sask. – The National Farmers Union (NFU) says that the report released by the working group assembled by Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz is shockingly hollow. In July, Ritz announced the formation of a working group whose purpose was to suggest how the grain marketing system should operate following the assumed end of the Canadian Wheat Board's (CWB) single desk by August 1, 2012. The working group only included anti-CWB farm groups, and there was no representation from the producer car groups and short line railway groups.

The report identifies numerous problems that will exist as a result of the CWB's demise. These problems include how producer cars and short lines will survive, and how the Western Grains Research Foundation, Canadian International Grains Institute, and Canadian Malting Barley Technical Center will be funded. But the report merely recommends that the government stand by and watch as the grain companies and railroads advance their own commercial interests, for the government to intervene only as a last resort.

“The only thing the report actually says is that market forces will decide everything and that the federal government will merely sit back and passively monitor it. Who do those market forces actually work for? There is no recognition of the true realities of the Western grains sector. This government still has not produced a plan for how the grains sector will work and how the CWB is supposed to function. The fact is this government has no idea, and nor does it care. It was a report written for the large players in the industry,” stated NFU President Terry Boehm.

“The report acknowledges that ending the single desk will cause major disruptions in both the grain trade and the transportation system, and that there will be an array of added costs for farmers and, likely for the public purse, along with greater uncertainty. With the world economy in its current precarious state, why would the government demolish a system that functions well for farmers and Canadians, as well as our export and domestic markets? It doesn't make any sense,” said Boehm.

“The report also fails to address issues such as blending, terminal rebates, tendering, and despatch which are currently benefits that the CWB provides to farmers. Without the CWB, who will be responsible for them, and who will benefit?”

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