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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NFU SUBMITS RECOMMENDATIONS TO ONTARIO FIT REVIEW

Guelph, ON – The National Farmers Union (NFU) has submitted several recommendations to the Ontario Ministry of Energy's Feed-In Tariff (FIT) Program Two-Year Review. These include requests for a stronger focus on energy conservation and equal rates for ground-mount and roof-top microFIT units.

Although the NFU supports the production of renewable energy as a way to conserve the remaining fossil fuel supply and to minimize the environmental impacts of energy extraction, it would like rural communities to have more control over large-scale projects. "As farmers, rural residents and local communities, we must benefit from renewable energy production in our communities and we must have the opportunity to decide whether or not large-scale renewable energy projects are even appropriate for our communities," said Ann Slater, farmer and Ontario NFU Regional Coordinator.

The NFU made the following recommendations in its letter to the FIT Two-Year Review:

1. There must be a stronger focus on energy conservation. Provide financial incentives for conservation initiatives and for farmers and homeowners who choose to live and work 'off-grid';
2. Tariff rates paid for microFIT projects, which are owned and controlled by farmers and home owners, should continue to be higher than the rates paid for larger-scale FIT projects. The rate paid for ground-mount units should be the same as that being paid for roof-top solar PV, so that rural and urban citizens are treated equally;
3. Community-owned and controlled projects, such as renewable energy cooperatives, need to be encouraged. In each size class, such projects should be paid a higher tariff than commercial projects;
4. MicroFITs and community-owned and controlled projects and energy co-operatives should have preferential access to the distribution grid;
5. Community consultations must be led by trained, independent facilitators so that communities and developers can have open discussions about the pros and cons of the project and seek to find solutions to community concerns;
6. Rural communities, through their municipalities, must have the opportunity to negotiate changes to address community concerns, to negotiate compensation for the costs incurred by the community during the development and life of the project, and ultimately to refuse to have an industrial-scale project erected in their community.

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